

RURAL WALKS:

IN

DIALOGUES.

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS.

By CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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RURAL WALKS.

DIALOGUE VII.

THE STRAWBERRY GIRLS.

[Scene—The Breakfast-room.]

Mrs. Woodfield.

I EXPECT to-day what is quite a treat for me, and will, perhaps, be accompanied with something not less welcome to you.

Elizabeth. I guess what it is,—new books from London.

Mrs. Woodfield. You have guessed rightly.

Elizabeth. And there are some for us?

Mrs. Woodfield. Yes; and some colours for your cousin and you.

Caroline. I am very much obliged to you. May I ask what the books are?

Mrs. Woodfield. What would you wish them to be?

Caroline. Oh! I shall be contented with your choice! But you know that I love poetry.

Mrs. Woodfield. And do not hate novels.

Caroline. I have heard you say, my dear aunt, that you did not yourself do much otherwise when you were of my age.

Mrs. Woodfield. And precisely for that reason it is that I would not have you read many of them. When I was a girl, I had nobody to direct my reading; and, being a good deal at a solitary house in the country, I fell upon all sorts of books that lay about, and many that nothing but the rage for reading, with

with which I was devoured, would have tempted a young person to look into. By this means I acquired, at a very early age, a great deal of desultory knowledge; and I was contented without reading novels, for there were none in the house I inhabited; and at that time, every little country town had not a circulating library, as they have now. I found, however, exquisite delight in the little narratives which are scattered here and there in the Spectator, Guardian, Tatler, World, Rambler, Adventurer, &c. and I read them with such avidity and interest, that I believe I could now repeat every one of them with tolerable correctness. Soon after I was eleven years old, I was removed to London, to an house where there were no books, and where my whole time was taken up by the attendance of masters from morning till night. But I found out by accident a circulating

library;

library; and, subscribing out of my own pocket-money, unknown to the relation with whom I lived, I passed the hours destined to repose, in running through all the trash it contained. My head was full of Sir Charles's, Sir Edwards, Lord Belmonts, and Colonel Somervilles; while Lady Elizas and Lady Arimintas, with many nymphs of inferior rank, but with names equally *beautiful*, occupied my dreams. My relation soon perceived that I was thinking of something very different from my music and my arithmetic (for my drawing I never neglected); and a poor squirrel and some birds I kept were formally accused by my masters, as being the cause of my neglect, by occupying great part of my time. I was threatened with the perpetual banishment of my unfortunate favourites, if any more complaints were made; and I redoubled my diligence that my menagerie might not suffer,

nor my secret studies be detected. It happened, however, that before I could derive any benefit from this partial reformation, I was caught in my clandestine reading, by my aunt, who, having sent me to practise a difficult lesson on the harpsichord, remarked, for the first time, (though the circumstance had often occurred before,) that she did not hear it. She therefore fancied I was gone to play with my squirrel, instead of conquering the piece of music; and descending softly into the room, the door of which was open, and which was just opposite to the place where I sat, she found me with my elbows on my knees, and in my lap were three greasy-looking books, on one of which I was so intent, that I did not see her till she was immediately close to me. I was sharply questioned as to the means by which I came by these books, and the servant, who had been employed

to procure them for me, was severely re-
proved. My future communication with
the circulating library was prohibited, and
my father was told of my misdemeanor.
Instead, however, of being angry, he only
told me that the more I read the better
he should be pleased; but he wished I
would not waste my time in reading in-
discriminately all sorts of books, but that
I would let him see what I was going to
read. He blamed me, however, for
doing any thing clandestinely; and for-
bade my having any books in future
which were not approved either by him
or one of my friends. In consequence
of this, I read among much other
more profitable reading, a great number
of novels; and though I certainly did
not derive much advantage from them,
I think the only harm they did me, was
giving me false views of life. Almost
all of them represent beings that do not
exist; and a girl who fancies she is to
meet

meet with a Sir Charles Grandison, and affects the perfections of a Miss Byron, would be ridiculous or unhappy. Another fault of these books is the consequence given in them to trifles. The heroines are described as being elegantly dressed, and the heroes wear coats of pale purple cut velvet, on a gold ground. Point ruffles and diamond buckles, and such acquisitions, are described among the felicities of the catastrophe, when the lovers are married, and all is blissful around them.

Caroline. I think nothing in the world so tiresome and dull as Sir Charles Grandison. There is so much bowing upon the ladies hands, so much about the cedar parlour, and uncle Selby, and dear grandmamma, that I never could get through it all. Besides, I know Sir Charles Grandison wore a wig.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, if he did?

Elizabeth. Oh ! what a fright he must have been ! Only think of a hero in a wig !

Mrs. Woodfield (smiling). A wig gives you now the most ridiculous idea in the world ; does it not ?

Caroline. One thinks of an old apothecary, or an old clergyman.

Mrs. Woodfield. The wigs, however, worn by the fine men when Richardson wrote, did not resemble such as now cover the heads of those venerable characters. Don't you recollect what fine flowing flaxen wigs adorn the heads of very young men, and even very little boys, in the great gallery at M— Hall ? Nothing gives one a more ridiculous idea of the fluctuation of fashions, or the false taste of adopting in painting such unnatural modes. Thus, the heroes of novels written fifty years ago, appear to us absurd caricatures. However, I do not
know

know that there is any evidence of Sir Charles Grandison's wearing a wig.

Caroline. Oh! indeed, aunt, he certainly did; for Sir Hargrave Pollexfen wore one, and I dare say they both dressed equally fashionable. Besides, Lovelace complains, in one of his letters, that his wig was wet through while he waited for Clarissa's letters.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, Caroline, we will not dispute on so important a point. I find you are minutely well read in these books, and you therefore must know, that, with all those faults of tediousness and repetition, they contain characters very strongly discriminated, and lessons of the purest morality. A great critic has said, that the madness of Clementina is the finest piece of painting in our language, after the King Lear of Shakespeare; and though the impossible perfection of Sir Charles, who seems so equal to every trial, that we

forget to be interested about him, is to many readers disgusting, yet it is not surely wrong to paint man as he *ought* to be, since there is a chance of inducing him to become, by the study of such a character, better than he is. However, we must defer any farther discussion of this matter till another time, for here comes Samuel with the parcels from London.

[CAROLINE and ELIZABETH go out, and return with books and materials for drawing.]

Caroline. Oh, my dear aunt! how much I am obliged to you! What a delightful set of crayons, and such a nice painting box, with pallet and all so complete!

Mrs. Woodfield. I am glad you are pleased, my dear Caroline. It is an ample return to me, when I see that you are interested; but, however, you shall make another repayment.

Caroline.

Caroline. To be sure I will, most readily.

Mrs. Woodfield. You shall superintend the lessons of my little Henrietta in drawing flowers. Here is the book I have purchased for her; and when she has practised a little in this, she shall try to draw flowers from nature, beginning with the most simple.

Caroline. My dear aunt, you could teach her much better yourself.

Mrs. Woodfield. I might teach her as well, perhaps, if I had time to give her; but that, unfortunately, I have not. The necessity I am under of writing continually on business, occupies most of those hours which ought to be dedicated to the education of my children. In you, however, Caroline, I have an excellent substitute in this amusing and elegant art; and while you instruct Henrietta, you will find an acquisition of knowledge to yourself: and besides

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that,

that, you will derive a clearer idea of the principles you teach, you will acquire an habit of attention and of patience, useful to yourself.

Caroline. It is very true that I find myself improved in music since Elizabeth has been my scholar.

Mrs. Woodfield. I am afraid those studies will be suspended a day or two, for these books will engage us too much to suffer us to give our usual attention to thorough-bass. Elizabeth seems quite absorbed in what she is reading already.

Elizabeth. It is a narrative so interesting that I happened to open upon!

Mrs. Woodfield. We will, however, leave it for the present, or the sun will be too high before we can reach the woods, where we will take some book of poetry to read, and return through the fir-grove on the other side the common, to avoid the heat. Take your baskets with

with you; perhaps we may find some strawberries.

[They go out.]

Henrietta. Oh! here are strawberries; already I have found several bunches! And there, a little lower, mamma, among that copse-wood which has lately been cut, I see the same poor children gathering them who brought those that you bought at the door yesterday. Mamma! I think if I gather them it will be robbing those poor children, who get a little money by selling them.

Mrs. Woodfield. It is an exquisite pleasure to me to see you so considerate, my Henrietta; but you shall amuse yourself with picking them, if it *does* amuse you; then add your *recolte** to theirs, and I will become the purchaser.

Elizabeth. These are the same children we saw the other day; and I fancy

* *Recolte*, gathering, collection.

that poor old woman, who is sitting on one of those faggots, is the grandmother they told us they lived with. One of the little girls is the most interesting creature !

[Mrs. WOODFIELD goes up to the old woman, converses with her, and makes her a small present—ELIZABETH and HENRIETTA gaze at her with a mixture of pity and terror expressed in their faces.]

Elizabeth. Dear mamma ! what a melancholy sight is a person so very old !

Mrs. Woodfield. So very old and so very poor ;—the spectacle is indeed humiliating and painful. Yet this poor old woman, whose figure has almost lost the traces of humanity, was the daughter of a rich farmer, and was, as I have heard other women of the neighbourhood relate, a great beauty in her time, and a celebrated horsewoman. When the mind is carried back to those days, it is difficult

difficult to imagine how such a change can have taken place.

Caroline (shuddering). I wonder that any person should think old age desirable.

Mrs. Woodfield. Yet we are so constituted, that evils, which at a distance appear so insupportable that death is preferable, approach gradually, and we seem not to feel them. If a girl, in the bloom of youth, were suddenly to become withered and decrepit, like that very ancient woman, she would probably die in despair. But of the most celebrated beauties that ever have been sung in the different ages of the world, some have lived to great ages, and

“To that complexion must have come at
“last,”

notwithstanding all the struggles of expiring vanity; and they have usually, I believe, been as much resigned to their lot, as women who, setting out without
any

any remarkable perfections, had less to regret of losses in the way. It is fortunate, perhaps, that self-love at first prevents our being sensible of the lamentable change that time makes in the person. Those who either have, or fancy they have been possessed of uncommon advantages, take great pains to hide the decay of those advantages, even when their glass compels them to avow the mortifying truth, and will no longer be contradicted by the flattery of their maid. But these efforts generally render more conspicuous the defects they attempt to hide. What is half so absurd, or excites so much just ridicule, as to see a fat woman of five-and-forty or fifty, with a broad face and a double chin, dressed in some flimsy gauze dress, which might well become the light figure of her youngest daughter; with stays so tight, that she can hardly breathe; flowers in her hair, and a pound of rouge

on

on her cheeks? Yet how often do such figures present themselves in public, and make themselves objects of laughter and contempt, instead of being entitled to our respect and regard! These poor gentlewomen do not consider, that they might be very agreeable women, though they cannot be beauties any longer; and that by pretending to what they are not, they lose all the esteem which they might engage as what they are, and by submitting, like reasonable beings, to the inevitable effects of time.

Elizabeth. But it is not for such people as those I am sorry; I think one sees old ladies as happy as young ones; and I am sure Caroline and I do not enjoy a ball, more than Mrs. Flint and Mrs. Wadford do a game at whist. How eager they always are to begin, and how cross if any body disturbs them! I am sure they are quite as happy as girls, especially when they win, and talk
the

the game over afterwards. Mamma, do you know I should like, when one of those old ladies is in the midst of her triumph at winning a rubber, and pocketting her half-crowns with so much delight, to go up to her, and ask her to give some of her winnings to such a poor old woman as we have just seen.

Mrs. Woodfield. Elizabeth, the idea is admirable. Tell me now, suppose the forms of society would allow you to address yourself to Mrs. Wadford, for example, a person of a very awful presence, and of no very gentle voice and demeanor, how would you set about it?

Elizabeth. I do not think I should be in the least afraid; but I would go up to her and say, "Mrs. Wadford, I am glad to see you have won a good deal to-night, and I am come to beg some of it for a poor old distressed woman, who is incapable of procuring any of the comforts

forts of life, though her great age makes them so necessary to her. She lives in a miserable cottage, which does not keep out the weather;—she has only a few rags instead of clothes, and no nourishing food; she has nobody to help her, for all her children are dead; and, what is yet more distressing, she has three of her grandchildren, whom the parish have sent to her to take care of, when she had more occasion to have some person hired to take care of her;—so, my dear madam, I am sure you will give her something for a little present relief.”

Mrs. Woodfield. Well! your pleading would be very good: now tell me what you think would be Mrs. Wadford’s answer.

Elizabeth. And you will not be angry, mamma, and say I am satirical?

Mrs. Woodfield. No; I give you leave to represent what you think would be her answer.

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Then I think she would look very red and very cross, and say, "Miss! I'm really surpris'd at your asking *me*! Fine times indeed, when little chits are so forward, and are taught to dictate about charity! Upon my word, Miss Woodfield, I shall take an opportunity of telling your mamma." Then she would have finished reckoning her money, have tied up her purse carefully, and have put it into her pocket, and perhaps be shuffling on her cloak.

Mrs. Woodfield. And would you, Elizabeth, be repulsed so easily?

Elizabeth. I think I should address her again, and repeat my petition, and perhaps bid her think, that she herself is old, and has the gout and the rheumatism, which she finds bad enough to bear, even with all manner of comforts about her; how hard then, I would say, must be the sufferings of a poor desolate creature, older and more infirm than

than you are, Ma'am, and who has not the necessaries of life?

Mrs. Woodfield. Oh! Elizabeth, you would spoil all by repeating that unfortunate word *old*.

Elizabeth. But would it not serve her right, mamma?

Mrs. Woodfield. Perhaps it might; but no person has a right to intrude upon another with disagreeable truths. Mrs. Wadford would tell you, that you were a pert girl, and ought to be sent to school and well whipped; that if people were poor, there was a provision made for them by the parish; and if girls were encouraged in such impertinence, it would soon be impossible for any mortal to have *parties*, unless such disagreeable children were excluded. Caroline, do you think Elizabeth's method would succeed?

Caroline. Oh! I am sure it would not.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. Could you not devise a better ?

Caroline. I would address to her some pathetic piece of poetry ; such as,

“ Pity the sorrows of a poor old man ;”

or that which I read the other day in the Scottish poet, representing the calamities of old age and poverty.

Mrs. Woodfield. I do not exactly recollect what you mean ; repeat to me some of the verses that struck you the most *.

“ The sun that overhangs yon moors,

“ Out-spreading far and wide,

“ Where hundreds labour to support

“ A haughty lordling’s pride ;

“ I’ve seen yon weary winter sun

“ Twice forty times return,

“ And every time has added proofs

“ That man was made to mourn.

* Second verse of “ Man was made to mourn,” a Dirge, from Burns’ Poems.

“ Look

- " Look not alone on youthful prime,
 " Or manhood's active might,
 " Man then is useful to his kind,
 " *Supported* is his right;
 " But see him on the verge of life,
 " With cares and sorrows worn,
 " Then age and want--Oh! ill-match'd
 " pair!
 " Shew man was made to mourn.
 " Many and sharp the num'rous ills
 " Inwoven with our frame,
 " More pointed still we make ourselves,
 " Regret, remorse, and shame:
 " And man, whose heaven-erected face
 " The smiles of love adorn,
 " Man's inhumanity to man
 " Makes countless thousands mourn."

Mrs. Woodfield. Alas! my dear girl,
 neither these, nor the most affecting
 verses that ever were written, would
 move an heart like that of Mrs. Wad-
 ford. We have heard, among the
 fables of antiquity, that the power of
 harmony, by which poetry and elo-
 quence have been understood, has ef-
 fected

fects miracles, and moved even the savages of the wild; but an inhuman heart, hardened by selfish policy, is not to be moved; and I would sooner undertake to mollify the untameable beasts of the desert. I believe the human heart is no longer responsive to the sounds of the sweetest measures, and that Orpheus himself might unite poetry with music in vain; three parts in four of the world "*bear not the voice of the charmer, charm she ever so sweetly.*" On Mrs. Wadford, I am sure, the pathos of poetry or of eloquence would be exerted in vain; she would be still as "*the deaf adder;*" for there is only one person she loves in the world, and that one is herself. Collected thus to a point, her affections are very strong, and it must be acknowledged, that if they are not diffused they are ardent.

Elizabeth. I always disliked that woman, ever since she beat my little dog,

who

who followed us into her odious house one day, because she supposed he would dirt her carpet.

Mrs. Woodfield. Her character is the same throughout. I am afraid that your project of affecting her feelings in prose, or that of Caroline to address her in verse, would be equally fruitless; and we must have recourse to some more certain method, if we would do any good to the ancient grandmother of our little Strawberry Girls.

Elizabeth. Mamma, I think that all poets are disposed to be melancholy. What can be more mournful than those verses Caroline repeated; or than a great number of other poems that are the most celebrated, particularly those of Gray?

Mrs. Woodfield. It is a very just remark; but the melancholy views given of human life by the poets are easily accounted for. The same keenness of

perception that makes them poets, awakens in them the warmest relish for the enjoyments of life, of course the most poignant feelings of its disappointments. Tremblingly alive, the common lot of humanity too often appears insupportable. A man of business, who is occupied in the acquisition of money, or in providing the necessities of existence, loses his mistress or his wife; but he knows that mistresses and wives are mortal: he gives the usual time to sorrow, and then returns to the common avocations of his life. But a poet nourishes or assuages his grief by telling it in harmonious numbers. It is from this that we fancy poets have a greater share of calamity than other people; whereas, in fact, it is only that they possess superior powers of description. Certain, however, it is, that in reading the lives of the poets, it appears as if they were an assemblage
of

of the most unhappy men that could be collected; and some, particularly Savage and Otway, are related to have suffered the most terrible extremes of poverty, even to famine. A later instance is that singular and unfortunate being, Chatterton.

Caroline. I once looked into his poems; but the language was such as made it impossible for me to read them with any pleasure.

Mrs. Woodfield. Nothing, however, is more easy. I have not got a good edition of Chatterton, but I have sent to order one down; I think you will learn, with a very little attention, to read his imitation of old English, with at least as much facility as you read the Scottish of Burns, though, perhaps, the subjects will be less agreeable to you.

Elizabeth. But Burns I cannot read, which I have often regretted, since you

have told me, mamma, that some of his poems are so pretty.

Mrs. Woodfield. I will read to you one of the most interesting, in English, save only a few words which must remain in the original dialect, on account of the rhyme : Indeed, except *about a dozen* words, it is already English.

To a MOUNTAIN DAISY, on turning one down with the plough.

“ Small, modest, crimson-tipped flower,

“ Thou’st met me in an evil hour ;

“ For I must crush, among the stoure,

“ Thy slender stem ;

“ To spare thee now, is past my power,

“ Thou beauteous gem !

“ Alas ! ’tis not thy neighbour sweet,

“ The bonny lark, companion meet,

“ Bending thee ’mong the dewy wheat

“ With speckled breast

“ When upward springing, blyth to greet

“ The purpling East.

“ Cold blew the bitter-biting North

“ Upon thy early humble birth,

“ Yet

- “ Yet cheerfully thou ventur’st forth
 “ Amid the storm,
“ Scarce rear’d above the parent earth
 “ Thy tender form.
“ The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
“ High sheltering woods and walls must shield;
“ But thou, beneath the random field
 “ Of clod or stone,
“ Adorn’st the rugged stubble field,
 “ Unseen—alone.
“ There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
“ Thy snowy bosom sun-ward spread,
“ Thou lift’st thy unassuming head
 “ In humble guise,
“ But now the share uptears thy bed,
 “ And low thou lies!
“ * Such is the fate of simple bard,
“ On life’s rough ocean luckless start’d,
“ Unskilful he, to note the card
 “ Of prudent lore,
“ The billows rage, and gales blow hard,
 “ And overwhelm him o’er!
“ Such fate to suffering worth is given,
“ Who long with *wants and woes* has striven,

* One verse is omitted.

“ By human *pride* or *cunning* driven

“ To misery’s brink,

“ Till wrench’d of every stay but Heaven,

“ He, ruin’d, sink !

“ Even thou who mourn’st the Daisy’s fate,

“ That fate is thine—no distant date,

“ Stern Ruin’s plough-share drives elate

“ Full on thy bloom,

“ Till crush’d beneath the furrow’s weight

“ Shall be thy doom.”

DIALOGUE VIII.

FANNY BENNISON.

IT was on a sultry evening in the month of August, when the heat having kept her children within the whole day, Mrs. Woodfield accompanied them for a walk to a farm house, with the inhabitants of which she had some business. They passed through fields on their way, in some of which the wheat was cutting, in others it was already cut, and the leasfers were gathering up the scattered ears. Elizabeth looked around for the lovely form of Lavinia, as Thomson has represented her; but no such figure was to be found among the groups of children and old persons dispersed about the field. When she saw a farmer drive in his

herd of hogs, before these unhappy people had gathered the scanty refuse that was left them; when she saw their disappointment, of which they did not dare to complain, but dejectedly and sorrowfully left the field, she was not only filled with indignation, but felt disposed to try the experiment Caroline had talked of, with the card-playing old lady; and to have said,

- “ Be not too narrow, husbandman; but fling
“ From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
“ The liberal handful. Think, oh! grateful
“ think!
“ How good the God of harvest is to you,
“ Who pours abundance o’er your flowing
“ fields!
“ While these unhappy partners of your kind
“ Wide hover round you, like the fowls of
“ heaven,
“ And ask their humble dole. The various
“ turns
“ Of fortune ponder; think your sons may
“ want
“ What now, with hard reluctance, faint, ye
“ give.”

Such

Such were the reflections Elizabeth communicated to her cousin, as, passing into another field where the reapers were yet at work, they saw the farmer himself, an immense fat man, without his coat, in a red waistcoat, emulating his face, urging his men to exertion, by promising them (as he was afraid of a change of weather, and was to finish that night) a larger share than usual of that favourite liquor on which he seemed to have fattened. They none of them, however, appeared to serve him with pleasure, even thus bribed; but executed their task, though with alacrity, yet without that delight with which labourers work at the harvest-home of a good and considerate master.

The farmer hardly noticed the ladies as they passed. On their arrival at the house, which was a large old-fashioned building, with a court, and cut hollies between the door and the farm-yard,

they were received with as much state by the mistress of the mansion, as if she had been the lady of the manor, instead of the tenant of the manor-farm. She was seated in a great chair in her ample kitchen, with two tall maids, without their gowns, and with blue linsley aprons, waiting on her, while she dealt out the beer for the labourers who were in the field. There was an air of consequence about her which amazed Caroline, who had imagined a farmer's wife to be a simple and civil being. But Mrs. Goosetray, the dame of this mansion, seemed to suppose herself as much better than her visitors, as she was much richer. Mrs. Woodfield and her family being seated, and the little business of paying for some corn and poultry she had bought being finished, Mrs. Woodfield said, "I wished to have seen Mr. Goosetray, as he is overseer and church-warden, to have asked him to allow some farther relief

relief to poor old Sarah Hobloun." [It was the grandmother to the little Strawberry Girls of whom she spoke.]

Mrs. Goosetray. Relief! more relief for she?—Lord, Ma'am! I wonder you should believe the cant of that artful old jade—she wants for nothing.

Mrs. Woodfield. I don't see how that can well be, Mrs. Goosetray; for the parish allow her no more than three and sixpence a-week.

Mrs. Goosetray. Aye, well! and enough too. I wonder, for my part, what folks would have?—Humph! I'd be glad to know whether we be to keep the paupers to live better than ourselves.

Mrs. Woodfield. No, not to live better, good Madam, nor so well, but certainly to live.

Mrs. Goosetray. Why so they do, don't they? There's that old woman have been a more trouble to my master than arrow a poor body in our parish;

for because she have once lived better forsooth, and had a farm on her own, why she expects to live still as though she was *well to do*. But, as I says to my master, what is that to we? be we to notice that? and ha'n't we enough to do with paupers, and such like, that we be *forced* to do?

Mrs. Woodfield seeing it in vain to contend with ignorance and avarice so invincible, silently determined to speak in favour of the unfortunate poor creature (whom she could not herself help to the extent of her wishes) to a magistrate in the neighbourhood, and was rising to go, when a young man about eighteen, pale, and to all appearance far gone in a consumption, opened a door near her, and, without lifting his eyes from some papers he held in his hand, advanced slowly to the table by which Mrs. Goosetray sat, and, putting them down, was retiring, when looking
up

up he saw some ladies who were strangers, and, a faint blush overspreading his languid countenance, he retired precipitately the way he came.

Mrs. Woodfield (*struck with the dejection and disease that he seemed to suffer under*). Is that your son, Mrs. Goofetray?

Mrs. Goofetray. My son, indeed! No, a thank you, Ma'am. I have but one son, he as has Fulwood farm, and not quite such a poor-looking scaramouch neither as that.

Mrs. Woodfield. I beg your pardon; I had forgot. But this young man seems unwell; he is some relation of yours, I suppose.

Mrs. Goofetray. Relations!—yes, one has always enough of they, as I says sometimes to my husband. But for my share, if they be no more no profitable than Billy Bennison and his sister, I had full as lief be without um.

Mrs. Woodfield. He has a sister then?

Mrs. Goosetray. Yes, indeed; just such a poor mopus for a woman, as this is for a man; but their father was my husband's brother-in-law; he was a parson, and comed down here some years agon to be curate, and so he and one of my master's sisters made a match on't. He got something of a living, or some such thing, in London, and did pretty well, till about two years or so agon, and then a died not worth a hundred pounds, and left my master's sister with them there two children. The boy had been brought up a scollard to be sure, and the girl to do nothing; so what was to be done? Master gived a matter of twenty pounds (unknown to me) to put Miss prentice to a mantua-maker, for her mother died broken hearted, half-a-year or so ater the parson, and the boy went out to write for the lawyers; but they've both been made so much of,

that now it seems they can't bear work nor confinement, nor I don't know what, not I: so as her mistress was afraid Fanny would die with her, and Bill he was of no use in lawyer Tearskin's office, bin as he had got a disorder, I forget what they calls it, upon his chest, by writing so much, my master, though he's none so near a-kin to um neither, agreed (for, as I tells un, a have more money nor wit) to give um the run here of our house for country air, and I have made um useful; for it is a rule with me to have no more cats than catch mice, as the proverb says.

Mrs. Woodfield. And what employments have you found for these young people?

Mrs. Goosefey. Why, first and foremost, I set Madam Fan to make up a brown *pattysway* silk that I've had by me this nine years, and then to mend a pair of stays, and new-body and sleeve
my

my striped cotton, and my yellow and white Manchester, and to turn my blue riding habit, which is as good as new, only a little moth-eaten from lying by; and then, as I had no more clothes to busy her upon, I got my quilting frame out, and she have quilted me as beautiful a *laylock* stuff petticoat as you'd wish to lay your eyes upon; and since she've finish'd that, I've set her at a quilt made of pieces as I've been begging and saving these five years; she've almost done it, and I assure you that it will be a good job; and I warrant I could not buy such a quilt for twenty shillings.

Mrs. Woodfield. Indeed she seems not to have been idle; but the young man—how have you found employment for him?

Mrs. Goosefret. Oh! why as to that, we wer'n't at no loss; for, you know, master have had long accounts as steward to young Squire Melfort, who is just coming

coming of age. Master was employed by lawyer Trickman, who was a sort of guardian, and now these things were to be settled, there was a power of papers, d'ye see, to put to rights, for master is no great scribe; and so as there is like to be a law-suit, it seems, atween lawyer Trickman and the young Squire, master, you see, cannot be too careful, and Billy Bennison is getting all them there matters to right for un.

Mrs. Woodfield. It is very lucky indeed that you have found such employment for both these distressed young people, but, perhaps, if their health admit of it, you may not be averse to their procuring some little employment elsewhere. If the young woman will come to me, I will endeavour to find some easy work in mantua-making for her, and perhaps I may also have some writing, such as copying of letters and
papers

papers on business, to give to her brother to copy for me.

Mrs. Goose-tray. Oh, Lord! to be sure; if they can find work while they stay with us, why so much the better.

Mrs. Woodfield. Can I speak to the young person, the sister of the gentleman I saw?

Mrs. Goose-tray. Gentleman, indeed! God bless us all!—Now, Madam, I must just mention one thing, and that is, that if so be as you can find some little matter of *employment* for this here boy and girl, that you would not go for to say, nor to put in their heads, that they, being born a sort of gentlefolks, are bad off to work for their living, and *sich*.

Mrs. Woodfield. No, no, Mrs. Goose-tray; I shall say nothing to make them discontented with their situation,—of that be assured.

The

The purpose of Mrs. Woodfield was to procure an opportunity of speaking to these unfortunate young people, of whose situation her conversation with the farmer's wife had given her the most deplorable idea. Mrs. Goosetray now went to the foot of the stairs, and in a loud voice, called, "Fan, Fan! here, girl, you be wanted: Come down, I say, directly." In a few moments, a very young woman appeared, whose countenance bore a strong resemblance to that of the youth; she did not seem so unhealthy, but the deepest dejection was visible on her countenance. Trembling and pale, she approached her unfeeling relation, at whom she seemed to be in the greatest awe and terror, and who thus spoke to her.

Mrs. Goosetray. Come hither, girl; why what?—are your feet tied together? I wonder what you're afeard on. Here's Madam Woodfield thinks she can

can find sum-mot for thee to do—dost hear?

Fanny Bennison (casting a look of mingled apprehension and acknowledgment at *Mrs. Woodfield*). I am very much obliged to the lady.

Mrs. Woodfield (much interested by the modest and innocent appearance of the young woman). Perhaps, Miss Bennison, you might make it convenient to go home with me this evening. I will have a bed made up for you for the time you remain with me, as I understand you are not in perfect health, and it may perhaps fatigue you too much to go to my house and return hither every day.

Fanny Bennison. You are very considerate, Madam—but—I am sure I shall be too happy to obtain your encouragement—but only—

Mrs. Gossetray (angrily). But—and only—and but—Pray, *Miss*, what does all them airs mean?

Fanny

Fanny Bennison. It is on account of my brother, Ma'am, that I hesitated. My poor brother (*she burst into tears*) is so very ill, that just now, in this busy time, to be sure, you cannot spare people to do for him, and if I am not by, he neglects himself; and, as I think he has not long to live, I cannot bear to leave him alone to his melancholy thoughts.

Mrs. Woodfield. I hope he is not so bad as your fears represent him to be. But if it give you pain, you shall not quit him; I will send the work hither, and if you will walk with me a little way this evening, I will inform you what I wish to have done.

Mrs. Goose-tray. Aye, aye, there, go you along; I shall have the kitchen full of the harvesters in a min-nut, and you'll be better out of the way.

There needed little preparation, and Fanny Bennison, encouraged by the easy gentle-

gentleness of Mrs. Woodfield, and the compassionate looks and civil attention of the young people, regained some degree of composure, as by the light of the harvest moon, which was now risen, they took their way by the side of the river towards home.

Mrs. Woodfield then drew from the young woman a confession of her sorrows. "Ah! Madam," said she, "our situation is indeed hard; but I will not murmur, for certainly it might have been worse. While my poor father lived, perhaps we were too delicately brought up for our slender expectations. He was so fond of us both, poor dear man! and so proud of my brother's advancement, while he was able to keep him at Oxford, that he did not love to remember, that if he died we had nothing. His life appeared to be a good one. His friends made him a great many promises of preferment, and upon the

strength

strength of those expectations, though he continued to live with the greatest economy, yet it made him easy about the future, and prevented his placing my poor dear brother in some other way of life: for after my father died, William had no longer any friends, either to support him at Oxford, or to procure him any fellowship, or some other provision, which my father had hopes of getting for him by their means. It is true, that, notwithstanding the expence of William's being there, and the education my father bestowed upon me, my dear parents had saved a little money; but the long illness of my poor father, who, though only about forty years old, was struck with the palsy many months before we lost him, and the languishing illness my dear, dear mother fell into immediately after his death, and which ended in our being deprived of her too, naturally exhausted their

their little savings—and—(*sobs here broke her voice*) and when this last dear parent was taken from us, we had hardly enough—to bury her by the side of my father !”

Mrs. Woodfield. Compose yourself, my dear Miss Bennison; let us try to look forward.

Fanny Bennison. Do not imagine, Madam, that the change we have experienced affects me for my own sake. I know the tenderness of my parents induced them to bring me up in a higher style than I had any pretensions to; but my brother's situation breaks my heart;—to see all the prospects his understanding and his education opened to him blasted, and to think that he has not *one* friend to countenance him, not one to save him from the sad drudgery of being a copying clerk, by which he does not earn enough to enable him to exist !

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. Come, come, I must not have you give way to despondence, my young friend; perhaps something may be done for your brother. I assure you, I am deeply interested for you both; but my power individually is nothing: however, I have connexions whom I can, I think, engage in favour of a young man so unhappily circumstanced: but I am much afraid, that while he continues to work as Mrs. Goosey represents, the country air will not produce so favourable a change in his health as might otherwise be expected.

Fanny Bennison (deeply sighing). I need not say to you, Madam, how ill his present situation must agree with a mind like his; under the idea of an obligation bestowed by Mr. and Mrs. Goosey, of which to be sure we hear a great deal, we both in reality work harder than we did at our respective employments in London.

But still I wish my poor dear William to remain a little longer, and especially during this dreadfully-hot weather; for merely to breathe the air of the country, and to have the advantage of fresh milk, must be beneficial. In London, at the office of the lawyer who employs him, I have never seen him lately, without believing that every time I took leave of him would be the last that I should ever see him. My hope now is, Madam, if you will be so very good as to employ and recommend me, that I may be able, by dint of continual labour, to pay for our board, and to release him from the constant toil he now undergoes, which indeed, the doctors say, was the cause of his illness at first, by obliging him to sit so much, and to lean with his breast against a desk.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, you shall not go any farther to night, lest you should be late home. Return, and make yourself

self as easy as you can, and endeavour to relieve the spirits of your brother. I will contrive to send for you both to-morrow, and perhaps, by talking with him, I may be better enabled to judge what situation will best suit him.

The poor girl, with an heart so overflowing with gratitude that she was unable to express its emotion, now took leave ; and Mrs. Woodfield, greatly affected by what she had heard, walked pensively along the path, gazing at the water, on which the moon-beams fell with undulating lustre. “ And this,” said she to herself, “ this is the end of all the solicitude which the father of these poor young people gave to their education ! So sink in friendless obscurity all the hopes that they had been taught to cherish of future competence ! Alas ! how many people are there who perish unlamented and unknown, for whom the fond heart of

parental tenderness has throbbed with the most flattering expectations!" Tears filled her eyes, as she cast them on the three girls, who were walking slowly before her, as if infected with a portion of her melancholy. She was conscious of the impropriety of too frequently presenting to young minds gloomy and discouraging prospects of human life; and she endeavoured to shake off the weight that hung upon her spirits, and to give the conversation a more cheerful turn. But efforts to force gaiety seldom or never succeed. The questions of her niece and her daughters, who all appeared greatly interested in the fate of Fanny Bennison, served rather to increase than dissipate the heaviness of her spirits. Still, however, as the best way to counteract the effect, not only of the little mournful story she had listened to, but of the general pensiveness of the scene, added to the lan-

guor that follows an hot autumnal day, Mrs. Woodfield told them what she proposed doing towards the alleviation of those sorrows for which they all expressed so much concern. And having at length satisfied their earnest inquiries, she desired, in order to change the conversation, or at least to give it a turn less really painful, that each should repeat some little piece of poetry that might lately have struck them enough to engage them to learn it.

After a moment's pause, Caroline chose, as most accordant to the scene, and to her state of mind, the following Sonnet, from those beautiful little pieces of poetry lately published by Mr. Bowles :

“ While slowly wanders thy sequester'd
 “ stream,
 “ Wensbeck, the mossy-scatter'd rocks among,
 “ In fancy's ear still making plaintive song,
 “ To the dark woods above, that, waving,
 “ seem

- " To bend o'er some enchanted spot; re-
 " mov'd
 " From life's vain coil, I listen to the wind,
 " And think I hear meek sorrow's plaint, re-
 " clin'd
 " O'er the forsaken tomb of one she lov'd.
 " Fair scenes! ye lend a pleasure long un-
 " known
 " To him who passes weary on his way,
 " The farewell tear, which now he turns to pay,
 " Shall thank you: and whene'er of plea-
 " sures flown,
 " His heart some long-lost image would renew,
 " Delightful haunts! he will remember you!"

Elizabeth, avowing her inferiority both in choice and manner to her cousin, yet ventured to repeat, since her mother would not excuse her, the following address to the Moon:

- " Queen of the silver bow! by thy pale beam
 " Alone and pensive I delight to stray,
 " And watch thy shadow trembling in the
 " stream,
 " Or mark the fleecy clouds that cross thy
 " way.

" And,

- “ And, while I gaze, thy mild and pensive
“ light
“ Sheds a soft calm upon my troubled
“ breast;
“ And oft I think, fair planet of the night !
“ That in thy orb the wretched may have
“ rest.
“ The sufferers of the earth perhaps may go,
“ Releas’d by death, to thy benignant
“ sphere,
“ And the sad children of despair and woe
“ Forget in thee their cup of sorrow here.
“ Ah ! that I soon may reach thy world serene,
“ Poor wearied pilgrim in this toiling scene !”

DIALOGUE IX.

THE FISHERMEN.

IT was about a month after the last conversation before Mrs. Woodfield had completely succeeded in placing the two young people, Fanny Bennison and her brother, in situations much more fortunate than she had even hoped to meet with. The young man, whose health was established by the advice of an excellent physician whom Mrs. Woodfield had engaged to attend him, was received as secretary, by a gentleman who was going to Italy on a voyage of pleasure and instruction, and who wanted an intelligent person to accompany and write for him. Fanny was taken by a lady advanced in years

to

to read to her, and attend on her; and Mrs. Woodfield had very soon the pleasure of hearing that both the brother and sister acquitted themselves so much to the satisfaction of the two friends to whom she had recommended them, that they seemed to have found protectors for the rest of their lives.

The success of her benevolent exertions in favour of the unfortunate, was a balm to the heart of Mrs. Woodfield, and consoled her for many vexations which sometimes weighed on her spirits. She had lately heard from her brother, Colonel Cecil, who had been wounded in the knee, and there were apprehensions entertained that he would be lame for life. She had not however told Caroline the whole of her apprehensions; for so much was her character changed by the pains Mrs. Woodfield had taken to teach her to reflect, and by being detached from those scenes of thoughtless dissipation,

that had rendered her heart insensible by distracting her understanding, that her temper was now more likely to be injured by extreme sensibility than to want it.

Anxiety for a brother she loved, with other domestic uneasiness, had at length so far affected Mrs. Woodfield's health, that it became absolutely necessary for her to follow the advice of a medical friend, and to go for a few weeks to the sea.

This she more readily complied with, as within five or six miles of her house was one of those retired bathing-places where invalids find it convenient to resort, to avoid the expence and noise of those that are frequented as much for pleasure as health.

Thither, therefore, Mrs. Woodfield and her three girls repaired, about the middle of September. The days were shortening, and the yellow hues of
autumn

autumn already touched the woods they left. In their garden, the most beautiful flowers were faded; hardly a few white spangles remained on Henrietta's favourite jessamine, which grew against the parlour window. The roses, and even the carnations, which had rendered their shrubbery and borders so gay, were now succeeded by the uninteresting Michaelmas daisy, the broad staring China aster, the tawdry sun-flower, or the holyoak; flowers which, like some characters in human life, are showy but worthless, and that hardly compensate, by their glaring colours, for the pain they give us in reminding us that they are the last in the annual procession of flowers.

The sea prospects had all the charms of novelty. The rocks, that bounded the shore, were high, and afforded an extensive horizon. Beneath them was a broad belt of shingles—stones that

nature seems to have collected as the best defence against the incroaching ocean, which continually beats upon them, polishing their rugged surfaces, and throwing them up in steep ridges. The bed of the waves was a hard and level sand, which when they ebbed, afforded a dry and delightful walk of some miles. It was here that, early on the morning after their arrival, the little party took their walk.

Mrs. Woodfield. Henrietta is as much enraptured with a walk by the sea-side, as if it were the first she had ever taken.

Caroline. And I am as much captivated with it as if it were entirely new to me.

Mrs. Woodfield. It has often been said, that a sea view is monotonous, and offers nothing but a repetition of the same objects, at high or low water; smooth in a calm, or roughened by winds. But I think it has much more
variety.

variety. What can be more beautiful than those shades of purple, blue, and green, mingling insensibly with each other, like the soft shadows of the rainbow, while suddenly breaking beyond them is a dark mass of shadow, the reflection of clouds above, and then, as far as the horizon, the most dazzling brightness. There is hardly an hour that does not present some new and beautiful appearance; and, so little am I wearied with continually looking on the sea, that it is to me the object of all others the most amusing.

Elizabeth. But I think; mamma, I should like to see large ships, and different kinds of vessels.

Mrs. Woodfield. I, on the contrary, am content to see them pass at a distance. Wherever large vessels approach the shore, there must be a deep harbour, formed by some river that empties itself into the sea; of course the shore
is

is muddy, and at low water not only ugly but offensive. Besides, I should be sorry to have this pure air polluted by the smell of all those things used about shipping; and to exchange the chirping of the sea-snipes, or even the harsher cry of the sea gulls and cormorants, or the tinkling sheep bell we now hear from the downs, for the screams of the horrible women that frequent sea-ports, the bustle of sailors, the noise of drawing up anchors, quarrelling, swearing, crying, and a thousand unpleasant sounds that are always heard in a port.

Caroline. A fleet is certainly a most beautiful sight.

Mrs. Woodfield. Certainly; the *most* beautiful that the ingenuity of man has formed. Yet the spectacle of a fleet of forty ships of war, which I once saw, however magnificent as a sight, conveyed to my mind only painful ideas.

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I figured to myself how many of those brave thoughtless beings, who were now rending the air with shouts of triumph, proud of the splendor of that shew of which every one considered himself as a part, and elate with the grandeur of his country whose strength lies in its navy, would, within a few days, perhaps, become mangled carcases for the prey of the monsters of the deep, and dye, with their blood, the waves over which they were now so gaily bounding; inflicting, at the same time, equal evils on an equal or more considerable number of human beings, whom they never saw before, and with whom they have no manner of quarrel.

Caroline. But, my dear aunt, if every body reasoned in this manner, there would be no wars.

Mrs. Woodfield. And if there were not?

Caroline. Why then there would be no occasion for either armies or navies.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. And what would there be in that to lament!

Caroline. Dear aunt, I don't know. But other nations would fall upon us and destroy us, if we had neither.

Mrs. Woodfield. Not if all nations would be equally reasonable, and learn that there is nothing to be obtained by our cutting each other's throats. Good God! when I reflect on the calamities and the expences of war, and the little advantage that has ever been gained by it, I own I am astonished at the madness of mankind.

Elizabeth. But, mamma, there have always been wars.

Mrs. Woodfield. And one blushes, as a human being and as a Christian, to trace those wars to their sources.

Henrietta. But, mamma, is it not true that the English have always been glorious about fighting? Oh! how I like to hear of Edward the Black

Prince,

Prince, and his making the King of France ride by him upon a black poney, and to see his picture in your great History of England, patting the head of a fierce lion.

Mrs. Woodfield. Really, Henrietta, your ideas of glory are worthy a little amazon, but they are not quite correct. The Black Prince, who, from the character that is given of him, was undoubtedly one of the best of our Princes, was so far from making his illustrious prisoner ride by him upon a black poney, that he himself took the poney, (if there was a poney in question,) and gave to the captured King a beautiful horse, richly caparisoned. The evening after the battle he waited on the King of France at table, and generously endeavoured to console him under his misfortunes; thus attaching to his character, as a man, praise infinitely superior to that of a mere conqueror.

But,

But, however, Henrietta, whatever passion for the glory of your country you have caught from studying your little histories of England, and from looking at the imaginary resemblance of our Kings in my great Rapin, I assure you that the laurels of Britannia by no means compensate for her scars.

Elizabeth. Mamma, at a great distance I observe one, two, three, four, five, six, seven large ships! are they ships of war?

Mrs. Woodfield. I am no judge of them, even if I saw them nearer; at this distance it is impossible to distinguish what they are. Indeed I can but just discern them with my glass: Do they go up or down the Channel?

Caroline. How do you mean, aunt, up or down?

Mrs. Woodfield. Do they go to the East or the West?

Caroline.

Caroline. Let me consider which is the East. Oh! I know; they go to the East.

Mrs. Woodfield. They are then going up the Channel, and are probably merchant ships, under convoy, going to the port of London.

Caroline. Perhaps from the West Indies; for now I see eleven or twelve others, still farther off. Ah! how glad must the passengers be that they are so near England! I remember I was, when I only came from France.

Elizabeth. Because you were sick at sea, but not because you were glad to leave France.

Caroline. But still it is pleasant to return to one's own country; and I am sure I should think so, were I coming from the West Indies.

Henrietta. Do you know, mamma, I saw a very great bird dart down to the water

water and seize a fish, which he seems to swallow in a moment?

Mrs. Woodfield. It was a cormorant. Those sea-gulls are fishing too; even now and then you see them dip into the rising wave. To what numerous tribes of birds the sea gives food! If you look along the sands you will see another species of bird, watching, as the tide retires, for shrimps, young crabs, and other minute fishes, or rather sea-insects, which the waves leave.

Henrietta. And where do they find trees to build their nests upon?

Mrs. Woodfield. Do all birds build on trees?

Henrietta. Yes, I believe so.

Mrs. Woodfield. You have already forgotten then, that larks build on the ground, swallows under the eaves of houses, and sand-martins, as well as some other birds, in the holes of rocks.

neglected buildings. Sea birds build in the chasms of the cliffs; so do the crows which we hear cawing above our heads; but these chuse only the highest chalky rocks, where they hope, but in vain, to be secure from the cruel and useless robberies of man.

Henrietta. Why surely, mamma, it is not possible for any body to take them from thence?

Mrs. Woodfield. One would believe so; but I have often shuddered to see a party of boys engaged in the perilous exploit of robbing these nests. They fasten a stick horizontally to a rope, which two or three of them secure to the top of the rock by means of a strong stake or an iron crow; one of them gets astride on the stick, and is let down the side of the cliff, to which he clings with his hands and knees; the breaking or giving way of the rope, or one false step, would precipitate him many fathoms

thorns on a mass of flints, where he must be dashed into a thousand pieces. Yet this hazard these unthinking creatures incur for a prize so worthless, that when they have got the miserable nestlings, they sell them to the first passenger they meet for an halfpenny, or, in default of finding a purchaser, wring their necks off—but *too* striking a resemblance has *such* folly to many of the pursuits that engage creatures wiser than these poor fishermen's boys!—But remark the porpusses; I see three of them playing near the boats! I believe we shall have a storm this evening; there is every prognostic of it on the sea, besides the appearance of those fish, which always denote it. We had better not go farther, as these squalls from the sea, at this time of the year, are sudden and violent. Elizabeth, can you recollect no description of the sea which you have read lately?

Eliza

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Elizabeth. I believe I can; it is in
Cowper.

Mrs. Woodfield. Repeat it.

- " Ocean exhibits, fathomless and broad,
" Much of the power and majesty of God ;
" He swathes about the swelling of the deep,
" That shines and rests, as infants smile and
 " sleep.
" Vast as it is, it answers, as it flows,
" The breathings of the lightest air that
 " blows ;
" Curling and whit'ning over all the waste,
" The rising waves obey th' increasing blast,
" Abrupt and horrid as the tempest roars,
" Thunders and flash upon the stedfast shores,
" Till he that rides the whirlwind checks the
 " rein,
" Then all the world of waters sleeps again."

Before they could reach their lodgings the wind rose, and dark clouds gathered over the sea, while the tops of the waves began to curl and whiten, as they rolled toward the shore; and, as the clouds were swiftly driven along,
the

the sea in some places assumed a deep green hue, and in others a dull purple; the sea birds forsook their fishing, and flew, shrieking, towards their rocky asylums.

This continued without much increase, however, till the sun sunk, fiery and half obscured by brown and purple spots and wandering clouds, beneath the horizon, tinging the air with that red and lurid appearance which always foretells violent winds. It was not yet, however, so strong, but that Mrs. Woodfield and her children determined on taking their short evening's walk. Early in the morning, the fishermen of the village, which possessed only ten or twelve boats, had gone out in pursuit of herrings and whittings. Before noon, their little vessels, the white sails appearing like feathers on the broad blue sea, had been almost invisible, from the distance they had gained; and soon afterwards

terwards they were out of sight. The wind was against their returning, and as the storm came on, their mothers and wives were assembled on the high grounds, in hopes of distinguishing their returning sails.

Mrs. Woodfield, who, from the conversation of the old men on shore, and the anxiety they expressed, began to feel very apprehensive for the mariners of the village, defied the increasing wind, which now blew almost an hurricane, to go to an height above, whence, with a small telescope she had, she was in hopes of discovering their distant boats; but darkness and tempest scowled over the sea, and it appeared as if the two elements of fire and water were mingled together in dreary confusion. The women now surrounded her, some expressing their apprehensions in terms of exaggerated terror, and others endeavouring to appear more

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courageous, and relating how on such and such a night they were sure the storm was worse, and yet no harm came of it.

Being too little versed in this matter to be able to afford comfort to the anxious group, Mrs. Woodfield and her family retired to their small lodging, but were soon alarmed by the increasing violence of the tempest.

Tremendous thunder now seemed to rival the fury of the winds; and floods of fire mingled with the rain, that drove in torrents so violent, that it seemed as if the sea itself were rushing on the land. Could the danger of the poor men who were out, and the agonies of the women who belonged to them, have been a moment dismissed from her mind, there would have been something of sublime horror in this war of elements. But her solicitude for these unhappy people suffered her not to feel

any other sensations than terror and pity. The women now endeavoured to hang out lights, that might guide the boats to the landing-place; but such power had the wind, that it was impossible, by any contrivance, to prevent their lights going out. In looking towards the sea, it sometimes seemed itself on fire; for the lightning ran along it, and the tops of the white foaming waves appeared to be tinged with flame. Shuddering, and huddling round Mrs. Woodfield, the three girls sat silent and pale; and when the hour of repose came, intreated that they might still be allowed to remain where they were.

Mrs. Woodfield. And why, my dears? Are you not equally safe in your beds? Are you not equally under the protection of Providence there as here?

Elizabeth. Yes, mamma, certainly; but it is so much better to be all together, and then let what will happen—

Mrs. Woodfield. And to us what should happen?

Caroline. Accidents, you know, sometimes happen by lightning.

Mrs. Woodfield. I allow it; but should such a circumstance occur when we are all together, you know, there would be more chance of our all suffering.

Henrietta (clinging round her mother's neck, and weeping.) Oh, mamma! let me then stay with you and my sister and my cousin; for I had a thousand times rather be killed with you and them, than be safe, if any of you were to be hurt.

Mrs. Woodfield. My dear little girl, do not let us torment ourselves with these, I hope, needless fears. We are in no danger, I trust; but what must be the condition of those poor men, who in pursuing the occupation on which their subsistence depends, are overtaken by this terrible storm? What the sad situation

situation of those that belong to them ; of families, whose fathers are struggling with the raging element ; of wives trembling for their husbands ; of mothers, dreading lest every wave that they hear thundering against the groaning cliffs, may have overwhelmed their sons, the comforts and supports of their declining days !

Henrietta. Oh, my dear mamma ! pray do not let us talk of it any more ; I cannot bear to think of it ; indeed I cannot.

Voices were now heard, clamorously declaring that some of the boats were approaching, and that the wind was abated. The rain had now ceased ; but its continuance would hardly have prevented the whole party from going out to witness the scene that now presented itself on the beach. The various expressions in the countenances of the women, the old men, and the children

from ten to thirteen years old, that were collected along the shore; their hopes and fears, as the boats appeared, or were for a moment lost behind the swelling waves, some flattering themselves they distinguished those who were dear to them, others still despairing; would have made the finest subject for a painter, who desired to study the passions. At length the men came on shore, though not without great risk, all but two boats crews, and those to whom they were related heard, in answer to their eager inquiries, that they were landed at a little creek about a mile lower down. It was with all the delight of benevolent hearts, that the spectators of this scene saw the content and satisfaction which the whole village now expressed. The dripping and fatigued fishermen returned each to his home, accompanied by their families,

some

some among whom were weeping for joy.

The little household of Mrs. Woodfield assembled round their fire for a moment before they retired to rest, and moralized on the spectacle they had seen.

Caroline. How little the poor women thought of *themselves*, while they were so anxious! though I saw some of them with little children in their arms, hardly able to stand against the violence of the wind, and trembling so, that they were obliged to hold by the rails on the beach!

Mrs. Woodfield. Why *we*, who were much less interested, my dear Caroline, were insensible of the inconvenience of the wind, and even of some rain that fell, while we were in anxious expectation of the arrival of the boats. How admirably Shakespeare has described the carelessness of personal inconvenience,

E 4

which

which is occasioned by violent grief and anxiety !

—— “ When the mind’s free,
 “ The body’s delicate; the tempest in my
 “ mind
 “ Does from my senses take all feeling else,
 “ But what beats there !”

Elizabeth. I thought of Lear, mama, when the storm was most violent, and remembered those lines ;

—— “ Things that love night,
 “ Love not such nights as these; the wrath-
 “ ful skies
 “ Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
 “ And make them keep their caves; since I
 “ was man,
 “ Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid
 “ thunder,
 “ Such groans of roaring wind and rain,
 “ I never
 “ Remember to have heard !”

Mrs. Woodfield. A tempest at sea, though one of the most awful and sublime spectacles the world can shew,
 has,

has, I think, been less frequently described in poetry than any other phenomenon of Nature. But, indeed, the unfortunate sufferers, in such a case, are not likely to be in a condition to analyse their sensations, or to remark appearances around them. There is, however, the Shipwreck, by Falconer, which has some fine passages.

How very correct, in all he describes, is that charming poet, Thomson! If you recollect what we have remarked to-day, you may observe how closely he has traced the progress of the storm:

——“ The cormorant on high
 “ Wheels from the deep, and screams along the
 “ land;
 “ Loud shrieks the soaring hern, and, with
 “ wild wing,
 “ The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky
 “ clouds;
 “ Ocean, unequal press’d with broken tide
 “ And blind commotion, heaves; while from
 “ the shore,
 “ Eat into caverns by the restless wave,

- “ And forest rustling mountain, comes a voice
“ That, solemn-sounding, bids the world pre-
“ pare ;
“ Then issues forth the storm, with sudden
“ burst,
“ And hurls the whole precipitated air
“ Down in a torrent. On the passive main
“ Descends the ethereal force, and, with strong
“ gust,
“ Turns from its bottom the discolour’d deep,
“ Through the black night that sits immense
“ around.
“ Lash’d into foam, the fierce conflicting brine
“ Seems o’er a thousand raging waves to
“ burn ;
“ Meantime the mountain-billocks, to the
“ clouds
“ In dreadful tumult swell’d, surge above
“ surge,
“ Burst into chaos with tremendous roar,
“ And anchor’d navies from their stations
“ drive,
“ Wild as the winds, across the howling waste
“ Of mighty waters.”

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DIALOGUE X.

THE VISIT.

IT was the middle of October before Mrs. Woodfield returned with her family to her own house. Her health was amended, and her spirits much cheered by letters she had received from Colonel Cecil, which informed her that, though he was not worse, he had found it necessary to accept the permission that had been given him to return home, in order to complete his cure ; and that as soon as he could undertake the journey he should be in London, remain there only as long as was necessary to consult one of his friends, a surgeon of great eminence, and then hasten to embrace his beloved

sister and his Caroline, whom he had never seen since the death of her mother. Preparations were now joyfully making for his reception; but a fine October admitted of frequent morning walks among the now fading woods and russet fields. Their paths through the copses were often interrupted by great branches, or whole trees of hazel, that had been torn down for the nuts. It was on remarking this, and some other appearances, that the following dialogue passed:

Henrietta. I suppose, mamma, it was in autumn that their wicked uncle turned out those two poor little children to perish in the woods, as I read in that old ballad.

Mrs. Woodfield. And why do you suppose so?

Henrietta. Because, you know, they are said to have fed upon blackberries, which are ripe at that time of year; and

I sup-

I suppose they gathered nuts too in the hedges.

Mrs. Woodfield. I know not that: But have you any other reasons for believing that it was autumn?

Henrietta. Yes, the robins, that sing now all day long, seem as if they did just so when they covered the poor little girl and boy with moss.

Mrs. Woodfield. There certainly is something particularly mournful in the autumnal song of the robin. Some poet, I believe Miss Seward, whose descriptive poetry is very charming, calls the robin

“The last lone songster of the fading year.”

And your idea, my little girl, is probably very just, as to the season when the orphan children are supposed to have been left in the woods, by the half-repentance of the ruffians who had been ordered to murder them; when “the babes, quite famish’d, laid them down
“to die.”

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Was it not true then, that this happened; because you say *supposed*?

Mrs. Woodfield. It probably did happen, or something like it, on which the story was founded.

Caroline. How is it possible that there ever could have been a person so wicked!

Mrs. Woodfield. Alas! dear Caroline, it is almost cruel to give to young minds the fatal information of *how* wicked mankind have been, and are capable of being, since this is one of those instances where, as

——“ Ignorance is bliss,

“ ’Tis folly to be wise;”

at least, it is humiliating to be wise, and takes off that enchanting ingenuousness, that native bloom of the mind which makes young people so amiable and interesting, and which, when once lost, is never recovered.

At

At this moment a gun that went off very near them, and which was followed by two more reports, made the whole party hasten out of the coppice with some precipitation; for though the girls had been taught not to affect fears on the sight or report of fire-arms, (which is a common and disgusting folly,) yet when they heard the shot rattle in the branches immediately over their heads, Mrs. Woodfield thought it was time to retreat. They presently reached a barley erfh, and were proceeding tranquilly on their walk across the field, when they were overtaken by a gentleman of the neighbourhood, with whom Mrs. Woodfield had some slight acquaintance, and presented with a leash (three) of pheasants, which were shot when they heard the report of the three guns. Mr. Northcote would have sent his servant to the house of Mrs. Woodfield, but she, in accepting them, insisted on leave to decline

At

decline giving him that trouble, and bidding each of the girls take one, she thanked him, and they proceeded homeward.

Elizabeth. Oh, what beautiful creatures these are!

Henrietta. I am sure it is a thousand pities to destroy such lovely birds. Ah! poor thing, see how this bleeds! Mamma, I am surpris'd any body has the heart to kill them.

Mrs. Woodfield. A sportsman has no more idea of sparing an animal on account of its beauty, than an epicure has of not eating it because of its having been splendidly clad before it was roasted. We are told, that the epicures of Rome reckoned among their greatest dainties those singing birds which we keep on account of the sweetness of their music; and that, in one of the enormously-expensive suppers given by Lucullus, a

dish was entirely composed of the brains of nightingales.

Caroline. What a dish ! Those men, aunt, must have been more hateful than those we now call epicures.

Mrs. Woodfield. Nearly the same, I believe. Gluttony is an odious vice, and always raises contempt and indignation. In the old, it is hateful and disgusting ; but in the young, it always excites, in me at least, some degree of abhorrence.

Caroline (musing). There are lines in some poem describing a pheasant, but I cannot recollect them, or where they are.

Mrs. Woodfield. They are in Pope's Windsor Forest :

" See ! from the brake the whirring pheasant

" springs,

" And mounts exulting on triumphant wings ;

" Short is his joy ; he feels the fiery wound,

" Flutters in blood, and, panting, beats the

" ground.

" Ah !

" Ah ! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
 " His purple crest; and scarlet circled eyes,
 " The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
 " His painted wings, and breast that flames
 " with gold !"

Caroline. How well the bird is described ! But, aunt, I have seen, in Lady Mary M—'s menagerie, pheasants very different from these.

Mrs. Woodfield. You have seen the painted or gold pheasant, and the pencil pheasant; both sorts come from the East-Indies.

Caroline. These, I think, are not less beautiful.

Mrs. Woodfield. No: the dazzling colours of the gold pheasant, which in the sun are almost too bright to look upon, and the delicate penciling of the white and black pheasant, are certainly neither of them more elegant than the burnished gold and black, the green neck and scarlet eye of the male birds

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in our own country. There is a variety in our woods with a circle of white feathers round the neck, or an horseshoe-shaped spot of white partly round it.

Henrietta. Oh! how I should like to have a place all netted over, as there is at Mr. D—'s, to keep pheasants in, and to collect all sorts of them. Mamma, are there more sorts than those three?

Mrs. Woodfield. I have seen the representation of another, which is called the peacock-pheasant, and which is painted as having the form of a pheasant, with plumage nearly resembling that of the peacock.

Elizabeth. If I had a menagerie, I would keep not only pheasants, but partridges and quails.

Mrs. Woodfield. Oh! you would have an immense collection, I have no doubt.

A hare, which seemed hardly able to drag itself along, at this moment came limping

limping out of the hedge they were near, and, only a few yards before them, stopped, and, turning her long ears to the wind, listened; then crawling a few paces, listened again, by rearing herself on her hind legs. Alas!

“ Hot-streaming, up behind her comes again
“ Th’ inhuman rout.”

Five or six beagles were now heard bellowing in an adjoining hedge-row. They presently dashed through, and the unfortunate object of their pursuit, though she exerted all her little remaining strength, had not staggered an hundred paces before she was overtaken. Henrietta shrieked with terror, when she heard the cries of the helpless animal, as the dogs seized it. In half a second it would have been torn into a thousand pieces, but a young farmer of the neighbouring village, with loud execrations, and in terms understood by the hounds, forced his horse through the hedge immediately

mediately afterwards, and snatching their prey away from the clamorous pack, paunched it, and threw its entrails among them.

The surly rustic, and two or three companions he had with him, then began to try the hedge-row around the same field for another hare; and Mrs. Woodfield, with her family, afraid of their succeeding, and not having the least inclination to be *in* at another death, hastened, by the shortest path, to regain their home.

They there found some unexpected visitors. The family of an old acquaintance of their deceased father, consisting of his widow, three daughters, and a son, were on their way from a public bathing-place not many miles off, and intending to sleep at the next post town, in order to have an opportunity of seeing the magnificent house of a nobleman near it the next morning,

morning, they had found it convenient to take a passing dinner with their former friends.

Mrs. Woodfield, though so unexpected an addition was likely to make her family dinner fall very short, did not put herself in that fuss which many notable ladies think necessary on these occasions; but calmly making such alteration in her little bill of fare as was possible at that hour, she returned to entertain her guests.

Mrs. Hammerton, the mother of the family, was one of those good women who are always in a bustle, either about her own affairs or other people's. Fond of what she called society, that is, people who would play at cards or talk with her, or both, she passed her life in public places; lived one summer at Tunbridge, the next at Margate, a third at Southampton, and a fourth at Weymouth; then crossed to Bath for a

month or six weeks; and always made it a rule to return to London against Parliament met; though what connexion there was between her playing at whist in Argyle-street, and the meeting of Parliament, (with no one member of whom she was connected,) no mortal could ever conjecture. But it seems her dear Mr. Hammerton, who had been a Banker, was one session in the House, and so, as she told her friends, she had been *used* while he was alive to be guided by the meeting of Parliament, and somehow it was become quite habitual. She was a lady who possessed indeed many of the qualities of a great orator: for she had a loud, shrill, and powerful voice, a never-ceasing tongue, and a courageous confidence in her own powers of entertainment, which never suffered her to doubt but that her auditors were as well pleased to hear as she was to speak.

The

The first compliments between her, her family, and that of her old friend, were no sooner over, than she thus began:

Mrs. Hammerton. And so, my dear creature, here you are settled in this rustic box! I declare I'm vastly glad to see you look so well *though*; and the two girls are vastly grown. I think Elizabeth will be handsome. Everilda, (*addressing herself to one of her own daughters,*) do you not see a resemblance between Miss Woodfield and somebody you know.

Miss Everilda. A resemblance! Let me see: No; I declare I don't recollect any body that . . .

Mrs. Hammerton. She is like our friend Lady Anne; very like her. Well, if she is as amiable, my good Madam, you will have reason to bless your stars; for Lady Anne is absolutely
a per-

a perfect character. Her sister Lady Charlotte, too, is amazingly amiable. A charming family!—But did you hear what happened about a month ago to their brother Lord Canterdown?

Mrs. Woodfield. I hear very little of lordly adventures here.

Mrs. Hammerton. Oh! but it made such a noise! Heavens! the papers were full of it; and indeed, my dear friend Lady Scoulborough said to me, in the greatest distress of mind, *What I shall do*, my dear Mrs. Hammerton, I *know* not; but I *believe* this affair of Canterdown's will absolutely give me my bilious complaint. Oh! Lady Scoulborough, said I—

[Enter a servant, who announces dinner—

They pass into another room, and seat themselves at table.]

Mrs. Hammerton. Lady Scoulborough, said I, (for she is the best mother and most amiable woman in the world,) I am

shock'd to death—(I'll take some soup, if you please)—shock'd to death, that your Ladyship should be so affected; and for my own part, I declare I am vastly surpris'd that you should think my Lord Canterdown to blame. To blame! cried she, all amazement that I should so have misunderstood her; not at all, said her Ladyship; no, no, that is not my meaning! but—(you seem to have excellent mutton here, I suppose it is down-fed)—but what hurts me, my dear Mrs. Hammerton, is that the fellow he has had this quarrel with is such a low creature, that in short it is vastly disgraceful for a man of fashion to have his name in the same paragraph. But, however, that leads me to tell you—I dare say you have not heard *that* neither, about the two Miss Hattons; you remember them in London?

Poor Mrs. Woodfield dreading an history of the two Miss Hattons, as loud, as

long

long, and as little to the purpose as that of Lord Canterdown, endeavoured in vain to change or evade the conversation, which, relating to people she never saw or desired to see, was very irksome to her. Her guest, however, continued to talk, and she compelled herself to listen with all the patience she could muster, comforted by the reflection, that if her punishment was severe it would be short.

Breath, rather than matter, seemed now and then to fail her loquacious guest, and then, or when the necessary intervals occasioned by eating occurred, her three daughters, willing to avail themselves of an opportunity of being relieved from involuntary silence, all began to talk together; a circumstance which, while it amazed Caroline and Henrietta, was rather a consolation to Mrs. Woodfield, and she smiled, as it brought to her recollection an answer of

Dr. Johnson's, who, when one of his acquaintance teased him, by the foolish trick parents have of making their children repeat to strangers what they have learned by heart, cried, "Let the pretty dears repeat it both together, Sir, more noise will be made, and it will be the sooner over." At length dinner and coffee were happily ended; the moon came to her assistance; and her guests, the talkative mamma, the chattering misses, and their brother, who did not talk at all, but affected the fine contemplative and contemptuous airs which many modern coxcombs assume, departed, to the extreme satisfaction of the family they left, who now assembled round their fire.

Caroline. Oh! thank my stars, those good people are gone! I never saw so disagreeable a set.

Mrs. Woodfield. And yet it was among such a sort of people, dear Caroline, that

you

you lived, when you passed your time in London, and among scenes which, I dare say, you often think of with regret.

Caroline. No, indeed, aunt; whatever I *may* have done, I never now think of London and public places and routs, but to recollect how much I am obliged to you for teaching me to find content without them.

Elizabeth. Oh! my coz, if you ever did regret such people as this Mrs. Hammerton, and these Misses, and this Master, what a sad taste you must have had!

Mrs. Woodfield. Yet my children are to consider that *their* not liking this family, is no proof that they are not very agreeable.

Elizabeth. Agreeable, mamma! it is surely impossible you can think so!

Mrs. Woodfield. I may not think so, and yet an hundred or a thousand other people may, and certainly do; for did

not the good lady give us a list of many very honourable persons with whom she lives in the greatest degree of intimacy, and who, I therefore suppose, find charms in her conversation, which you little rustics cannot discover. Instead, however, of entering into a too minute criticism on the failings, real or imaginary, of the persons we have seen, let us learn to avoid what strikes us as being so unpleasant in them, and let us never fall into that very common error of talking to people on subjects that cannot either interest or amuse them. When Mrs. Hammerton tells me a long story of Lady This and Lord That, she knows that I am not acquainted with them, and that it is impossible I can care about their insignificant adventures; but she hopes to impress me with high ideas of her consequence, from her thus being always "in the very best company." Poor ambition! as if there was
any

any other real distinction but that which is acquired by goodness of heart or superiority of understanding. This poor woman was a merchant's daughter in the city ; and I have heard Mr. Woodfield say, for I was not then acquainted with her, that, in the younger part of her life, she would have thought it an honour to have received a curtesy from the lady of a new-made knight at Haberdashers' Hall, for she was even then partial, like Mrs. Heidelberg, to *quality*. By means of some persons of rank, to whom her husband, who was a banker, granted certain pecuniary accommodations, she has been introduced to two or three titled people ; and among those of that description there are many who, even more than their inferiors, find life so tedious, that they are glad of any company, and therefore do not refuse such as Mrs. Hammerton, certain that if they cannot laugh *with* her, they can

laugh at her, which answers their purpose as well: perhaps, when she is in the society of those for whom she has so profound a veneration, she may bridle her rapid eloquence, and permit others to talk a little too.

Elizabeth. I cannot imagine how that is possible; for I observed, that whenever any thing for a moment interrupted their mamma, the young ladies all began talking together as loud as possible.

Caroline. They put me in mind of a nest of hungry young birds, all opening their mouths at once.

Mrs. Woodfield. Perhaps there is nothing in which people err so egregiously as in the manner of carrying on conversation. In those who value themselves on superior talents and information, there is often an eagerness to be attended to that defeats their purpose of being either instructive or agreeable. To bear an equal part in conversation, without

without hurting the self-love of others; to allow that *reciprocity* of discourse that gives every one an opportunity of being heard, and which is the great charm of society, is the effect of the something we have agreed to call good breeding: and to be really well-bred, requires good sense, which enables us to enter into the characters and sentiments of others. Thus, there are people *naturally* well bred; and there are others who, though they have always lived among people of high rank, are so rude and ill-mannered, that it is a penance to be in their company.

Caroline. I own, aunt, I have sometimes been in company with people who are called "remarkably clever," and I have thought it owing to my own ignorance that I could not find out the brilliancy of which I had heard so much.

Mrs. Woodfield. That is another error, my dear Caroline, to believe that people

who have eminent talents are always to be witty; what can be said witty in common conversation? I often have remarked one of those unfortunate people, who has the reputation of a wit, labouring to produce some pleasant sally, because he knew it was expected of him, but failing, has been discouraged for the whole evening; to add to which, some good-natured friend has observed, that “Mr. E. was not in spirits.”

Elizabeth. Mamma, I'll tell you who tries me more than any body,—Mrs. Cardimore.

Mrs. Woodfield. And yet she is the best kind of woman in the world.

Elizabeth. But she has somehow such a teasing way; is always finding fault, and telling people how they might do better. Then she has so many whims about her own children. Jemmy looks pale, and Mary has a trick of standing upon one leg, and she is afraid little
Emily

Emily will have bleak eyes; really it tires one to death.

Mrs. Woodfield. Mrs. Cardimore was an heiress, and was always brought up to think that every thing relating to her was of the utmost importance. The mind, strongly impressed with this idea, has never lost it, even in a long commerce with the world: she teases her husband, poor man! more than she does her friends; and, in the midst of affluence and prosperity of every kind, has found the art of making him and herself miserable. It is in vain that some friends, who loved them both, have endeavoured to cure her of this foible, which degenerates into a vice, by representing to her how happy she is, compared with this or the other person. She does not think so; she sees nothing extraordinary in *their* being unhappy, impoverished, or liable to any other evil; but that *she* herself should have

the smallest pebble in her path, seems the most strange thing in the world. Yet with all this, Mrs. Cardimore is really a well-meaning woman; is a good wife and a good mother; though no person who has passed a whole day in her company ever desires to pass a second.

Caroline. Yet I dare say, aunt, that the self-love, that appears so disagreeable in this lady, is not more than every body has, but that people who have been less indulged contrive to conceal it better.

Mrs. Woodfield. Not always. You remember, I think, Mrs. Indworth?

Caroline. Perfectly well.

Mrs. Woodfield. She is another instance of the same irksome temper, appearing in a somewhat different form. Without beauty and understanding, and born rather below the middle ranks of life, she has a prodigious desire to be a person

person of consequence wherever she appears ; and she contrives to effect it, by always being discontented. As she has no children, *her* miseries are all about herself ; and she happens to have an husband who loves her, and who either does not or will not see how troublesome she makes herself. It is always too cold or too hot ; the air is oppressive ; her nerves are absolutely shaken to pieces by the roads ; the wind gives her an insupportable headach ; the dust blinds her ; sitting up late destroys her health ; going to bed early makes her low-spirited ; London never agrees with her ; the country is too bleak for such a frame as hers.—The poor man her husband, who is unaccountably attached to her, is always busied in trying to make her easy, but he feels horribly *uneasy* himself, though he does not know that all his former friends are pitying him. One of them, a very pleasant lively young man,

man, observed to me, the first time I ever saw Mr. and Mrs. Indworth after their marriage, "That his poor friend, Frank Indworth, was a wretch for life, for he had married a *piper*."

Elizabeth. He must be a very good-natured man; for some cross brutish men would not endure such a woman.

Mrs. Woodfield. I have often observed, that these teasing-tempered women, who are insupportable to their acquaintance, have the undeserved good fortune to meet with patient and obliging husbands. However, my dear girls, it is an experiment that I hope none of you will ever try; and now we will dismiss the conversation to which the Hamerton family gave rise, and, to soothe our minds after some unpleasant hours, we will have recourse, as usual, to the poets. Elizabeth, read to me the Invocation to Evening, which I bade

I bade you mark yesterday in the Task.

Elizabeth.

- " Come, Evening, once again ; season of peace,
" Return, sweet Evening, and continue long !
" Methinks I see thee in the streaky West,
" With matron-step, slow moving, while the
 " Night
" Treads on thy sweeping train ; one hand
 " employ'd
" In letting fall the curtain of repose
" On bird and beast, the other charg'd for
 " man,
" With sweet oblivion of the cares of day,
" Not sumptuously adorn'd, or needing aid,
" Like homely-featured Night, with clus-
 " t'ring gems ;
" A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow,
" Suffices thee ; save that the moon is thine
" Not less than hers ; not worn indeed so high
" With ostentatious pageantry, but, set
" With modest grandeur in thy purple zone
" Resplendent less, but of an ample round.
" Come then ! and thou shalt find thy votary
 " calm,
" Or make me so !"

Caroline.

Caroline. If I could remember it, which, however, I cannot do perfectly, I would repeat another address to Evening, which I know you admire, aunt; Collins's blank Ode.

Mrs. Woodfield. Cannot you recollect it? try.

Caroline. Not more than the two or three last verses, I fear.

“ While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft

“ he wont,

“ And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest

“ Eve;

“ While Summer loves to sport

“ Beneath thy lingering light;

“ While fallow Autumn fills thy lap with

“ leaves,

“ And Winter, yelling through the troublous

“ air,

“ Affrights thy shrinking train,

“ And rudely rends thy robes;

“ So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,

“ Shall fancy, friendship, science, smiling peace,

“ Thy gentle influence own,

“ And love thy favourite name.

DIALOGUE XI.

THE ALARM.

THE dark and gloomy month of November was now arrived; but to outward appearances the family of Mrs. Woodfield gave less attention than usual, for they expected, by every post, to hear that Colonel Cecil, who was arrived in London and slowly recovering, would fix the day for setting out for their abode; and only his earnest desire, and the necessity of constant attendance on her family, prevented his sister from attending him in town.

Every morning, however, when the weather did not forbid their excursions, his daughter and her two cousins went
early

early to the place where the letters were usually left, about a mile and a half from the house, eager to procure some new intelligence of his intended arrival, though Caroline could not think of the approaching interview, which could not fail of being extremely affecting to them both. When her father bade her adieu, her mother was suffering under a lingering illness, which soon after terminated in her death. The recollection of that scene, as well as of all the dangers her father had since encountered, must make their meeting now very affecting to both.

The country, which once appeared so melancholy a residence, had now lost its horrors. Gratitude towards her aunt, affection for her cousins, and a taste for the domestic amusements and resources the country afforded, had taken place of that sullen apathy, which, on her coming to reside in the family,

had

had given her aunt so much uneasiness.

The good sense and taste that nature had given her, had now room to display itself; and even the dull and grey skies, the almost dismantled woods, and cheerless aspect which every object wore around her, failed not to awaken in her mind poetical recollections.

On their way to the cottage by the high road side, which served as a sort of post-house to the neighbouring villages, was a rocky eminence: from the top it afforded a view of the sea; at its foot ran the narrow-winding path; and its abrupt and rugged sides presented, in some places, bare scars of rock, where the sand-martin or the bat had found shelter; in others it was shaded with broom, female fern, and festoons of ivy. It was here that, during the heats of summer, the little party had often stopped on their walk, to enjoy the cool

cool shade of the rocks, and the refreshing echoes of the stream, that, issuing from a cavern near the top, fell in small but clear and brilliant gushes of water, till it wound away near the path over a deep-worn channel, and found its way to the river which crossed a neighbouring heath.

No flowers now adorned its stony acclivity. An old oak, whose tawny leaves had yet resisted the sharp winds of autumn, seemed to mourn over the withered foliage beneath. The three girls stopped a moment, at the desire of Caroline; who, resting upon a fragment of rock, recollected that she had somewhere read a description of scenery extremely resembling the landscape before her. A little consideration brought the passage to her mind; but she felt grateful, that the last lines had no allusion to her circumstance, who might, from the loss of a father,

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father, have found them but too applicable :

- " 'Twas here, even here, where now I sit
 " reclin'd,
 " And Winter's sighs found hollow in the
 " wind :
 " Loud and more loud the blast of Evening
 " raves,
 " And strips the oaks of their last lingering
 " leaves,
 " The eddying foliage in the tempest flies,
 " And fills, with duskier gloom, the thicken-
 " ing skies ;
 " Red sinks the Sun behind the howling hill,
 " And rushes, with hoarse stream, the moun-
 " tain rill ;
 " And now, with ruffling billow cold and pale,
 " Runs, swollen and dashing, down the lonely
 " vale ;
 " While to these tearful eyes, Grief's faded
 " form
 " Sits on the cloud, and sighs amid the
 " storm *."

Hardly had Caroline finished repeating these lines, which, except the hour

* From *Louisa* ; a Poetical Novel, by Miss Seward.

of the day, gave to her imagination the reflection of the scene before her, when suddenly, from an excavation in the rock which had concealed them, came forward a group of gypsies, two men, three women, and several little ragged children, who all speaking together in language peculiar to themselves, began to beg; while the three girls, extremely terrified, walked on as quick as they could, searching, however, for what halfpence or small money they had about them, which they threw towards the importunate group; one woman, however, still continuing to follow them, and insisting on being allowed to tell their fortunes, while, on looking back, they saw the two men still gazing after them; their terror, and of course their speed, increased, and they at length gained an open road, and saw two men at plough in a field immediately near it. Their troublesome fol-

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lower then left them ; but Caroline, though she had more courage than either of her cousins, was so much alarmed at an encounter, which in all their solitary walks had never happened before, that she engaged a farmer's servant whom she met, and whom they happened to know, to attend them for the rest of their walk, and she determined to go home another way.

Their walk was fruitless, for they found no letter from Colonel Cecil. On their return home, they of course mentioned the apprehensions they had felt on their way ; but occupied in another business just at that moment, and seeing them all safe around her, Mrs. Woodfield deferred listening to their little history till evening.

It soon came :—and, assembled round their work-table, some other occurrences that had happened to a friend of Mrs. Woodfield's engaged them. The
lowering

lowering day had been followed by a stormy and wet evening. The wind and rain beat heavy against the windows; when Henrietta said, "Mamma, I wonder where those people we saw to-day take shelter in such a night as this."

Mrs. Woodfield. In barns and out-houses. They are a people of whom the farmers are said often to be afraid; and that they find it less hazardous to give them leave to assemble of a night in their out-buildings, than, by refusing, incur their resentment.

Elizabeth. But I don't understand why they are called gypsies.

Mrs. Woodfield. Because they are supposed to come originally from Egypt, though in France they are called Bohemians. There was an elaborate history of them published not long since, which, however, I never happen to have met with, so that I do not know

the result of those inquiries, which I conclude the historian made, as to the cause of this singular race of people being spread over Europe, where they are said to have long had, and indeed still to have, a government and laws of their own. I recollect having seen, when I was a young woman, more numerous parties of them than I ever observe now, and that they had more swarthy complexions. I should rather think, that the people we denominate in this country travellers, unhappy houseless wanderers, who, some from necessity, and others, perhaps, from choice, lead the same kind of vagabond life, have so intermingled with the original race, that their distinct character is nearly lost. Among these wretched people were those who used to be called Mad Toms, and affected insanity to enforce or excite charity. Edgar, you know, in Lear,

VOL. II. G says,

says, he will assume the semblance of one of those who,

——“ From low farms,
“ Poor-peling villages, sheep-cots, and mills
“ Enforce their charity.”

And I remember being extremely terrified, when I was a girl, with female beggars, who came dressed with flowers and straws, and called themselves Cousin Betties. I imagine these people are all connected.

Caroline. There are a great many stories in novels, of gypsies stealing away children: Do you think, aunt, it ever happens?

Mrs. Woodfield. I cannot say that it never has happened: but, I should think, much less frequently than novelists have found it convenient to suppose. The gypsies seem to have made a great impression on the mind of Fielding, who tells a story about a party of them

in

in his Foundling, which would not be endured in a modern novel, as it is foolish, and contributes nothing to the progress of the story.

Caroline. Joseph Andrews, too, is exchanged by the gypsies.

Mrs. Woodfield. Yes, but with inconsistencies in the relation, that a writer of the present day would not dare to venture upon; and which, greatly as I admire much of Fielding's writing, has always, in my mind, spoiled the story. However, I believe now, that no children are stolen or exchanged by those people; and that, notwithstanding your panic to-day, for which, however, I do not blame you, they do little other harm than pilfer from the farms, kill hares in their seats, or sometimes venture on a sheep, or a pig, that they find straggling in the fields, remote from any habitation.

Cowper, in the first book of "the Task," gives an admirably correct description of them; and having done so, very justly exclaims,

" Strange! that a creature rational, and cast
" In human mould, should brutalize, by choice,
" His nature; and, though capable of arts,
" By which the world might profit, and him-
" self,

" Self-banish'd from society, prefer
" Such squalid sloth to honourable toil!
" Yet even these, though, feigning sickness oft,
" They swathe the forehead, drag the limp-
" ing limb,

" And vex their flesh with artificial sores,
" Can change their whine into a cheerful note,
" When safe occasion offers; and with dance,
" And music of the bladder and the bag,
" Beguile their woes, and make the woods
" resound.

" Such health, and gaiety of heart, enjoy
" The houseless rovers of the sylvan world;
" And breathing wholesome air, and wan-
" dering much,

" Need other physic none, to heal th' effects
" Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold."

Hardly

Hardly were these lines finished, when at the iron gate which separated the court before the house from the common on which it was situated, a grumbling voice was heard, hoarsely and rudely demanding admittance. Terror and affright were immediately visible on the faces of the three girls; nor was that of Mrs. Woodfield entirely exempt from the same symptoms. She desired them to listen. The man at the gate was heard, amid the howlings of the wind and driving of the rain, to growl out his displeasure at being kept so long in the storm, and to thump at the gate with a great stick.

[Mrs. WOODFIELD rang the bell; and a female servant entering, she bade her send Samuel, a lad of about eighteen, to see who it was.]

Mary. Lord, Ma'am, Samuel isn't within; he've been gone down to the village about an hour ago, and is not returned yet!

Mrs. Woodfield. You must go to the door then, and see what the man wants, who so loudly insists upon being let in.

Mary. Who? I, Ma'am, go to the gate! No, that I would not, not if you would give me the whole world: but, Ma'am, I'll go up stairs and open one of the windows, and ask him, if you please, what he wants; for, I am sure, 'twould not be safe nohow to speak to him from below, unless one know'd who it was; for it was but last week that five men in sailor's jackets came a-begging to Comb Farm, and frightened Dame Jedwyn out of her very wits, and if it had not a been . . .

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, well; but what is all this to the purpose? However, since your fears are so violent, and we have no man in the house, go up, and, from the window, inquire what the man wants.

Mary

Mary (returning out of breath). Lord, Ma'am; 'tis a man come on horseback, says how he have got a letter which he must deliver into your hands.

Mrs. Woodfield (visibly agitated). A letter! Good Heavens! from whom can it be, that it is thus sent express? for you say, Mary, he has an horse with him.

Caroline. Oh! it is from my father; I am sure it is! He is worse; he is prevented coming!

Mrs. Woodfield. I hope not. Alas! it may be some letter that relates to my absent boys. But what weakness this is! while we are hesitating we might be satisfied. Give me the umbrella; I will go out myself.

Caroline and Elizabeth (speaking together, Henrietta clinging to her mother). Oh! pray, dear aunt, dear mamma, do not go; or suffer us to go with you.

Mrs. Woodfield. No, my loves! I certainly shall not do that. I am persuaded there is no danger; but if there were, it would not be lessened by your sharing it. I shall only speak to the man through the gate.

[She goes thither and receives a letter, which she returns eagerly to read.]

Caroline. Oh, how my heart beats! if it should be bad news from my father!

Mrs. Woodfield (*recovering herself*). Well, dear girls, I can now happily put you out of suspense. It is a letter, Caroline, from your father, but fortunately it brings us the most agreeable news. He has already left London: he remains two days at E— with his old friend General T. and will be here to a late dinner on Thursday.

Caroline. Thank Heaven, then! we shall certainly see him at last.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. And with him another visitor, who will also be very welcome.

Caroline. Surely not one of my brothers!

Mrs. Woodfield. No, my dear Caroline; so much good fortune does not come together. But would you not be glad to see one of Elizabeth and Henrietta's brothers? your cousin George, who has been so long in Scotland?

Caroline. Certainly I should.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, then, we shall have the pleasure of seeing him with my brother. He came from Glasgow, and, going immediately to his uncle, found him on the point of leaving London, and began his journey with him: and now since our hearts are at ease, let us sit down, and call ourselves to account for the panic we have been all thrown into.

Caroline. From which, my dear aunt, you were not more exempt than we were.

Mrs. Woodfield. I own I was not; but my apprehensions were infinitely greater, after I knew it was a man with a letter, than while I supposed it to be only a drunken fellow, who, without having any bad design, might have been troublesome, as we had nobody in the house to oblige him to go away.

Henrietta. I was sure, almost, that it was one of those frightful gypsy men we met to-day.

Elizabeth. And I was persuaded that it was the sailors that Mary says have frightened a great number of people about the country lately.

Mrs. Woodfield. Really you had both lucky imaginations. I shall be angry with the servants, if they tell you these stories of threatened robberies, and I know not what: but it is astonishing
what

what a passion the *people* in every country have for the horrible and the wonderful. I have known a mad dog, a gang of imaginary housebreakers, or two or three stout vagabonds in sailors jackets, keep an whole neighbourhood in alarm for six weeks ;—some had heard them, some had seen them at a distance, but I never met with persons who pretended to have suffered from these terrific objects. As to mad dogs, that have from time to time alarmed the country, I could never find any other real cause for the panic they have occasioned, than some miserable starved dog, who, become savage through hunger or pain, has fled from his inhospitable home, or has been driven from it by blows or torments, and, taking shelter in some out-house, or under the straw in a farm-yard, is discovered, and hunted from his concealment by the brutal clowns, who drive him away

with blows and shouts, and then wonder the miserable animal appears wild and distracted, and snaps at every one who approaches.

As to the marvellous stories of robberies and housebreaking, which sometimes run through a country, I never, on inquiry, could discover above one of them to be founded on fact. At this distance from London, such things very rarely happen; and, alas! my dear children, it is an improvident weakness to exhaust our spirits in contending with imaginary or possible evils, when it is but too probable that the happiest and most prosperous life will give to every one sufficient exercise for their fortitude.

Even this little alarm was a specimen of the necessity of reflection, if we would escape from the miseries of unreal afflictions, which, though they cannot last long, are too acute to be borne even a moment without injury. With-

out reflecting, Caroline was seized with immediate apprehension for her father ; I thought too of him, but I thought still more of my absent boys ; so naturally do the mother's feelings supersede every other feeling.

Caroline. And do you not think, aunt, that children love their parents as well as parents their children ?

Mrs. Woodfield. Certainly not. The most tenderly affectionate child does not feel, for the fondest parent, the same degree of affection as that parent has felt for her. This is so ordered by nature, who seems to have made the love of a mother for her children the strongest of all sensations.

Caroline. And yet, aunt, I think there are addresses of affection from sons to their mothers, in one or two Poets that I could name, which do the highest honour to the filial tenderness of the authors. I do not recollect
any

any in which the parent addresses the child.

Mrs. Woodfield. I believe, however, that I can repeat two little pieces of this sort; one of which you have already seen, though you have, perhaps, forgotten it: it is addressed by a mother to her children, whose future fate, from a long series of calamitous circumstances in their family, seemed to be doubtful, and too probably unfortunate.

SONNET.

“ Sighing, I see yon little troop at play,
“ By sorrow yet unhurt, untouch’d by care,
“ While free and sportive they enjoy to-day,
“ Content, and careless of to-morrow’s fare.
“ Ah! happy age! when youth’s unclouded
“ ray
“ Lights their green path, and prompts
“ their simple mirth,
“ E’er yet they feel the thorns that, lurking,
“ lay
“ To wound the wretched pilgrims of the
“ earth.

“ Bidding

“ Bidding them rue the hour that gave
“ them birth,
“ And threw them on a world so full of
“ pain,
“ Where prosperous folly treads on patient
“ worth,
“ And, to deaf pride, misfortune pleads
“ in vain.
“ Oh ! for their future fate how many fears
“ Oppress my heart, and fill mine eyes
“ with tears !”

The other piece of poetry was written by a woman of high rank and admirable talents, who, without the same causes for apprehension, contemplated her two sons, eagerly engaged in their infantine sports, with those mingled emotions of delight and anxiety, that a mother only can feel, and, as I have heard, wrote the lines in question with little or no premeditation :

“ Sweet age of blest delusion ! Blooming boys,
“ Ah ! revel long in childhood's thoughtless
“ joys,

“ With

- “ With light and pliant spirits, that can
“ sloop
“ To follow, sportively, the rolling hoop ;
“ To watch the sleeping top with gay delight,
“ Or mark, with raptur’d gaze, the sailing
“ kite ;
“ Or, eagerly pursuing pleasure’s call,
“ Can find it center’d in the bounding ball !
“ Alas ! the day *will* come, when sports like
“ these
“ Must lose their magic, and their power to
“ please,
“ Too swiftly fled, the rosy hours of youth
“ Shall yield their fairy-charms to mournful
“ truth ;
“ Even now, a mother’s fond prophetic
“ fear,
“ Sees the dark train of human ills appear ;
“ Views various fortune for each lovely child,
“ Storms for the bold, and anguish for the
“ mild ;
“ Beholds, already, those expressive eyes
“ Beam a sad certainty of future sighs ;
“ And dreads each suffering those dear breasts
“ may know,
“ In their long passage through a world of
“ woe ;

“ Per-

" Perchance predestin'd every pang to
 " prove,

" That treacherous friends inflict, or faithless
 " love;

" For ah! how few have found existence
 " sweet

" Where grief is sure, but happiness deceit!

DIALOGUE XII.

THE FAMILY ASSEMBLED.

THE re-union of the members of a family long separated and tenderly attached to each other, is one of the most pleasing and affecting spectacles that society presents. Colonel Cecil, in seeing the favourable change that had taken place in the mind and manners of his daughter, found his heart overflow with tender gratitude towards his sister; and the regret he had been once so acutely conscious of, for the loss of a wife whom he had loved but too much for his happiness, and indulged too much for her own, was every hour less sensibly felt. For however his blind affection for her, and the strong influence

fluence she had obtained over his mind, had prevented him from seeing her errors while she lived, he now internally acknowledged those failings, which he could not yet have borne that any other person should even hint at; till these keen sensations subsiding by degrees, he thought of the death of his wife as of an event that had at once pained and relieved him.

But the fondness he had once had for her, seemed now transferred to his daughter, towards whom he felt every day his tenderness increase. Her amiable manners, her attentive duty, added to the natural graces of her form, made him believe her the most perfect of human beings. His health rendered it necessary for him to sell out of the army; but on this he could not determine, being strongly attached to a profession in which he had passed the greatest part of his life; but when he reflected

flected on the dangerous situation in which his beloved daughter would be left, should he die, either in the field, or from the fatigues incident to the soldier's life, which he was now so little able to encounter, he determined to sacrifice his own inclinations to the welfare of the child who had so many claims on his heart; and, to the inexpressible satisfaction of his family, he now quitted the army, and, at his sister's earnest solicitation, agreed to remain with her till he could find some small house in the same neighbourhood, or fit up a cottage within a mile or two, for himself and his Caroline. Enlivened by his presence, that of her second son, and her two little boys from school, the small habitation of Mrs. Woodfield had never appeared so gay. Their morning walks were not interrupted, though the Colonel could not accompany them, being still very lame, and having been desired

to take no other exercise yet, than what could be procured by a servant's drawing him about in a garden chair. The weather was sometimes too severe for him to venture into the air in that conveyance; and when it happened so, Caroline, or one of her cousins, remained at home to read to him and attend him.

Sometimes the long evenings were beguiled by works of imagination, such as Mrs. Woodfield judged not improper for her daughters, young as they were, to listen to. The admirable novels of Evelina and Cecilia, but particularly the latter, afforded them at once entertainment and instruction, without giving them those false views of life, which is one of the most serious objections against this species of writing. Essays, and the periodical papers, supplied the want of many performances equally interesting and unexceptionable. The Spectator, Guardian, and Tatler, the Rambler, Idler,

Idler, World, Adventurer, Connoisseur, Mirror, and Observer, offered them an incessant variety of entertainment and instruction. Voyages and travels also were introduced ; and in no one instance did they find it necessary to have recourse to cards, to enable them to pass, without languor, the longest evening of December. Among other amusements, each endeavoured to recollect some view of the scene, in every part of the world, when Winter reigns in his severest form, and even with more rugged features than he wore at the present moment in England. The Colonel recollected some of those lines of Phillips's, which have been so much celebrated, describing winter in Sweden :

“ When every shrub, and every blade of grass,

“ And every pointed thorn, seem'd wrought

“ in glafs ;

“ In pearls and rubies rich the hawthorns shew,

"While, through the ice, the crimson-berried

“ glow ;

“ T

" The thick-sprung reeds the watry marshes
 " yield,
 " Seem polish'd lances in an hostile field ;
 " The spreading oak, the beech, and tow'ring
 " pine,
 " Glaz'd over, in the freezing æther shine ;
 " The frightened birds the rattling branches
 " shun
 " That wave and glitter in the distant sun ;
 " When, if a sudden gust of wind arise,
 " The brittle forest into atoms flies,
 " The crackling wood beneath the tempest
 " bends,
 " And in a spangled shower the prospect ends ;
 " Or if a southern gale the region warm,
 " And by degrees unbind the wintry charm,
 " The traveller a miry country sees,
 " And journeys sad beneath the dropping
 " trees."

Mrs. Woodfield. Oh ! brother, your
 quotation is excellent ! but I shall, as
 usual, bring forward the modern Poet,
 whose descriptions never fail to give me
 new pleasure. How beautiful are his
 frost-pieces !

" The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
 " Beneath the dazzling deluge ; and the bents,
 " Or

- " Or coarser grass, up-spearing o'er the rest,
 " Of late unsightly or unseen, now shine
 " Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
 " And fledged with ivy feathers not superb."

His picture of the effects of frost on a water-fall is also inimitable.

Henry Woodfield. But, my dear Madam, I, who have not yet learned to relish blank verse, at least not as you do, have another living Poet to quote. What can be finer than these few lines of Dr. Darwin's, that set before us some of the most striking features of a polar winter !

- " * Where leads the northern star his lucid
 " train,
 " High o'er the snow-clad earth and icy main,
 " With milky light the white horizon streams,
 " And to the moon each sparkling mountain
 " gleams ;
 " Slow o'er the printed snows, with silent
 " walk,
 " Huge shaggy forms across the twilight stalk,

* Dr. Darwin.

" And

“ And ever and anon, with hideous sound,
 “ Burst the thick ribs of ice and thunder
 “ round.”

Mrs. Woodfield. The winter scenes of Thomson are not, in my opinion, inferior to any of these. But, instead of any repetition of what we all know so well, I will relate what happened, not many years since, to two ladies with whom I was acquainted in the North, who were lost in the snow, on their way from Scotland.

In one of the provinces nearest, though not actually in the Highlands, dwelt a Scottish gentleman, who, though of as ancient a family as any in his country, possessed no other fortune than a small paternal farm; on which, however, he contrived, with the assistance of a wife, whom he had married early in life, to bring up a family of three sons and a daughter, not only decently, but comfortably. The boys, as soon as they

were old enough, were sent out into the world. One entered into the army, another went to the East Indies, and the third, after having been some few years in the compting-house of a merchant in London, was taken into the business; and, by his assiduity and quickness, soon became so much master of it, that his former master, now his partner, already very rich, retired from its fatigues to an house at a small distance from London, leaving the whole concern to Mr. Charles Widdrington. The very flourishing situation of this third son was, very naturally, a great acquisition of happiness, as well as prosperity, to his father, his mother, and his sister, to whom he frequently made presents, which enabled them to live in much greater affluence than they had done before. At length, Charles Widdrington made some connexion with a person intrusted with the
affairs

affairs of government; and by means of this friend, made such advantage of the fluctuation of the funds, that in a few months he doubled his fortune; and such golden visions arose to his imagination, that he quitted the business on which he had so prosperously begun the world, and gave himself up entirely to the more alluring career of speculation in the stocks, by which he had no doubt of realizing, in a very short time, an immense fortune.

For some time, his success was more than equal to his most sanguine expectations. He went down to visit his father in all the splendour of a man of large fortune; directed some additions to be made to the family-mansion; ordered new furniture; dressed his mother and sister in a style they had never before dreamed of; and fixed on the spring of the following year (for his visit was made in autumn) as the time when

he intreated them all to come to London for some months, that Eupheme (which was the name of his sister) might receive that polish which a great capital alone is supposed to give. She was not more than eighteen; and being very pretty, he persuaded himself, that if she was introduced to the world as the sister of a man of fortune, her own could not fail of being established by an affluent marriage.

Eupheme, who till then had never any ambition higher than to remain in Scotland, and to be, at some future period, mistress of such an humble habitation as her paternal house, was not much dazzled with these schemes of future greatness: but on her father, they had a very different effect; in the long conferences he had with his son, he seemed to have caught all his enthusiasm in pursuit of fortune. They entered into some engagements together, which the elder
Mr.

Mr. Widdrington assured his wife would turn out greatly to the advantage of the whole family; and early in November, their son left them, elate with the visions of accumulating fortune, which now offered to him for the ensuing winter.

Soothed with these golden dreams, six or eight weeks passed away, when the family of the elder Widdrington was suddenly aroused from their indulgence by two men from London, who demanded to speak to him. He was shut up with them for some time, and then, in visible agitation, he came to his wife, and told her, that some circumstances had occurred in the affairs of his son Charles, which had made his presence absolutely necessary in London, whither he must go with the persons who were then in the house, and who were about to set out immediately. Though Mrs. Widdrington was entirely

unacquainted with such matters, she saw, by the confusion and distress that appeared in the countenance of her husband, that all was not well. She of course expressed her uneasiness in very strong terms, which Mr. Widdrington endeavoured to appease, by telling her, that the affair, on which his presence was necessary in London, would be settled with very little trouble, and that it was not likely either to diminish or impede the future prosperity of their son.

Mrs. Widdrington, relying on the assurances of a man who had never deceived her, endeavoured to conquer the uneasiness she felt: it was yet easier to re-assure their daughter, and both saw, with apparent calmness, the master of the mansion depart from an abode which he had not quitted for any time for a great number of years.

When he was gone, however, the apprehensions of his wife became more
uneasy

uneasy to her; yet she knew not what she feared. This painful anxiety was a little subdued by a letter she received from her husband, written on the road, which repeated those assurances he had given her before his departure, and seemed to breathe a tranquillity of mind which she thought it was impossible Mr. Widdrington could assume, if her fears had any foundation. He promised to write to her the moment he arrived in London, and every week till his return, which he said there was no doubt of his doing within a month.

Thus re-assured, the mother and daughter returned to their usual simple occupations; but time wore away: twice as much had already elapsed as was necessary for Mr. Widdrington to have arrived in London, and to have written from thence, but no letter came. His wife, however this circumstance might renew her alarm, endeavoured yet to calm her mind, by believing

that the hurry of the business which had carried him to London might engage every moment of his time ; but a week, ten days longer passed, and no letter came. Unwilling to communicate to her daughter the anguish she felt herself, she concealed her terrors till they could no longer be a secret to any body ; for the house was now visited by those sort of men who are in Scotland what sheriff's officers are here, who informed her that, at such a time, a seizure would be made of all the effects in the house, and cattle on the farm, &c. in consequence of debts Mr. Widdrington had contracted in being engaged for his son.

Heavy as this stroke was, it was some hours after rendered almost insupportable by a letter from Mr. Widdrington himself, in which, after a short and confused preamble to prepare her for the cruel intelligence he was about to communicate, he informed her, that, in consequence

sequence of the treachery of a man, who to save himself had sacrificed his son Charles, for whom he had some months before engaged himself to the amount of all he was worth in the world, they were both entirely undone; that his son had absconded, and that he was himself in the King's Bench prison, whither he intreated her to come, with Eupheme, as soon as possible, as it was only by the exertions of so faithful a friend that he had any hope of being released.

The wretched wife, seeing how much occasion there was for fortitude, endeavoured to collect enough to carry her through the trying circumstances she was thus involved in. She had no male relation to whom she could apply for assistance, for she was the last of her family: on herself alone, therefore, she must depend; and endeavouring to give to her terrified daughter some portion of that courage she wanted herself, they turned

whatever they could into money, and hiring a chaise at the nearest town where such a conveyance was to be had, they set out for Edinburgh, where, on arriving, they meant to have proceeded to London by the public conveyances; but finding that very expensive, they were persuaded, by the only acquaintance they had there, who did not fly from them in their adversity, to hire a chaise, which he engaged to find at a cheap rate, that should carry them as far as York, where he said he would give them a letter of introduction to a friend, who would, at his request, find for them the best and cheapest conveyance to London. Of this offer Mrs. Widdrington gladly accepted, for at her time of life, (as she was upwards of fifty,) in no very strong health, and depressed by the greatness and suddenness of the calamity that had fallen on her family, she was glad to find any expedient

dient by which she might escape from the fatigue and hurry of stage coaches.

This matter being arranged, they began again their melancholy journey, and the first two days (for they could proceed but slowly) passed without any accident. On the morning of the third, a fall of snow threatened to impede their progress; but impatient to get on, Mrs. Widdrington pressed the driver to hasten as much as possible. The man, who probably was already tired of the engagement he had made, either was, or pretended to be taken very ill, and, in despite of their remonstrances, stopped at a small alehouse by the way-side, where he lingered two hours under pretence of recruiting his strength, and then told them that, as he found it impossible for him to go any farther, he had hired a lad who would drive them to a town about four miles off, where, if he could not re-join them in the morning, the landlord

of the alehouse they were at, had a brother, who would undertake to conduct them safely to York.

The prayers and remonstrances of Mrs. Widdrington were equally vain. Above an hour passed in arguing with him to no purpose. Night was coming on, the snow continued slowly to fall, and the dread of being compelled to pass the night in so wretched a place as they were then in, at length determined Mrs. Widdrington to submit. They departed then, between five and six in the evening, for the town in question, which lay out of the high road; but the master of the alehouse assured her, the man who was to drive knew the way perfectly well, that the road was good, and that it was the only place where they would be sure of meeting with a person that would carry them safely to the end of their journey.

Before

Before they had crossed the wide heath on which the alehouse was situated, the storm of snow increased: it was nearly dark, and the horses, from the balls of snow that gathered on their feet, and from the slipperiness of the road, seemed to be so fatigued that they were likely to fall at every step.

The man who drove was a sturdy clown, who seemed never to have driven a chaise before. He was not the less obstinate for being very ignorant, and he plunged on through thick and thin, regardless of the entreaties of Mrs. Widdrington, or the danger he was frequently in of overturning the chaise.

In this manner they blundered through a large wood, where the snow had not yet concealed the track that led, as the man said, to the town in question. It brought them out on the edge of one of those extensive wolds or moors so frequent in the north of England. It was

almost dark; yet the man, persisting in his assurance that he perfectly knew the road, though all was now covered with snow, the chaise was suddenly overturned by the falling of one of the horses, and the driver thrown to some distance.

He soon, however, recovered himself, and, not without many execrations, approached to deliver the mother and daughter from their perilous situation in the chaise. They were neither of them hurt, but greatly terrified, alike at what they had suffered and what they feared; for it was now evident that one of the wheels was broke, and that in the carriage it was quite impossible for them to proceed. Mrs. Widdrington, her trembling daughter now hanging on her arm, collected all her resolution to consider what was to be done; and at length determined that the postillion should put their baggage on the horses, and lead the way,

way, while they attempted to find the road back to the house they had left, for the dreary expanse before them afforded no sign of habitations; not a light glimmered across the desolate plain, and the man owned that the town to which they had been directed was at least five miles off on its opposite side.

Nothing can be imagined much more deplorable than the situation of these two poor women, who never had before been exposed to the least hardship or difficulty. To remain where they were, was to perish in the snow before morning, yet it was far from clear that they should be able to reach any shelter. The man, however, who did not seem much less alarmed than they were, walked on, leading the horses; and the mother and daughter, holding by each other, followed as well as they could.

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Suddenly the road which the man had taken turned into a kind of lane; by the reflection of the snow, they discovered that it was bounded on one side by the wood they had been in, and on the other by an high old wall. They were then near an house; a circumstance that Mrs. Widdrington spoke of with the greatest joy; but their guide was so far from appearing to share their joy, that he exclaimed, in great consternation, that he had missed his way, and that it was better to go back. Mrs. Widdrington, regardless of his apparent reluctance, now eagerly asked which was the way to the entrance of the house. The man suddenly answered, that it was no matter, for that they should get no good there, and 'twas better not to attempt to enter.

Any shelter, however, appeared so desirable to Mrs. Widdrington, that she disregarded this speech; but Eupheme eagerly asked the man, " Why they had

had better not try to gain admittance?"

"Why!" replied he, "why, because 'tis haunted."—"And is it not inhabited then?"—"Oh! ay, there's inhabitants sure enough, such as they be."—"If there are," said Mrs. Widdrington, "nothing shall prevent my asking a shelter for the night." She then again repeated the question of which was the way to the front, or to any entrance of the house. The man with reluctance shewed her, and they, in a few moments, came to the corner of an high wall, and turning, perceived an high and heavy old-fashioned iron gate, through which they saw a court, and the front of a large old-fashioned stone house with those kind of scolloped points that look like the corners of a minced pie. The window-frames, they could perceive, were of heavy stone-work, and no light appeared at any of them; but
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as it was not late, Mrs. Widdrington desired the man to endeavour to find a bell, or otherwise to make their distress known to the persons within. This, therefore, though still very unwillingly, he attempted; but for some time in vain. A dog, however, was more alert than the rest of the household, and starting with a violent bark from a kennel in the court, he came with such fury to the iron gate, that Eupheme, retreating in terror, besought her mother to go back, and rather encounter the fatigue of returning to the alehouse on the heath, than attempt to enter that frightful house.

The raging of the dog had more effect on the people of the house, than the noise of those who had alarmed him. A faint light gleamed from one of the casements above. A form, which could not be distinguished through the gloom, appeared for a moment at it, and then glided

glided away. All the stories he had ever heard about the supernatural inhabitants of this house, now recurred to the possillion, who, with his teeth chattering in his head, rather from fear than cold, again implored Mrs. Widdrington not to think of entering it.

The light now again appeared in the chamber. A figure which did not appear to be the same, slowly opened the casement, and in a sharp and tremulous voice, demanded who was there, and what was their business.

The incessant barking, or rather roaring of the dog, hardly permitted Mrs. Widdrington to answer, (in an accent that admitted no doubt at least of her country,) that she was a person from Scotland, who, with her daughter, was travelling towards London, but that having missed their way, in the snow, their chaise was overturned and broken, and they were likely to perish during
so

so severe a night, if the inhabitants of the house were not charitable enough to receive them.

The old man or woman who had spoken to them now retired, and, without giving an answer, shut the window. The heart of Mrs. Widdrington sunk within her. She looked round, to see if any cottages surrounded this inhospitable mansion, where she might find an asylum, which it seemed to deny her, but none appeared. Its front looked through a curve in the woods over the extensive moor they had attempted to pass, and on the sides of it were high walls and ruinous offices. A dark and heavy storm of snow now came on, and the objects which were before but faintly seen, were no longer discernible. Mrs. Widdrington gave herself and her daughter up for lost: the dog, however, was a sufficient intimation to the persons within,

within, that their petitioners still remained at the gate.

Almost a quarter of an hour longer passed before any one again appeared. At length the same dim and doubtful figure whom they had before heard speak, slowly opened the same casement, and bade them go to another gate a few yards farther in the wall, where he said he would come and speak to them. They crept to the place he pointed out, for by this time they were nearly perished with cold. Here they again waited some time, till, from a side door of the old Gothic edifice, the figure, holding a lantern in one hand, and in the other a rusty broad sword, slowly approached. He was dressed in a long black or very dark gown; something equally dark was bound over his hollow brows; his face was long, pale, and shrivelled, and two small eyes glared from their deep sockets, under a broad rusty

rusty hat. He held up his lantern when he came close to this gate, which was also of iron, and examined the three persons who appeared at it, but spoke not a word in answer to the earnest intreaties that Mrs. Widdrington made to be let in. After having made this silent inquiry for some minutes, he told her, in a voice that made her shudder, that though it was what he had sworn never to do, yet, as he believed her distress might be real, he would, for once, break through his resolution, and let strangers enter his house; but that as for the man with them, he could give him no other permission than to go into the stable. The man who, half-frozen as he was, felt no inclination to enter an house where he was firmly persuaded evil spirits kept their court, declared he should be quite as well content with the stable. He was admitted, therefore, into the yard, and the old man pointed

to a door on its opposite side, where he said there was a shelter for himself and horses; a shelter was all he seemed disposed to grant to either of them.

While the postillion, then, trembling, and looking back at every step, led the weary animals across the dreary yard, Mrs. Widdrington and her daughter, petrified with terror and cold, followed the old man, who, with a slow and feeble step, walked before them. At the door of the house stood another figure, who, except his having a more squalid appearance, resembled their dismal-looking conductor. This second strange figure let them pass, but spoke not; and as they entered an high bricked hall, roofed with some kind of black wood, he barred the door behind them, and then stalked after them.

The man with the lantern, which reflected a dim and lurid light on the melancholy mansion, moved slowly out of
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the hall, and entered a long passage. Overcome with terror, Eupheme now clasped her mother's arm, and faintly articulated, " Good God ! whither are we going ?"—" Have patience, have courage, my child," answered her mother, still endeavouring to lead her on ; but she hung back involuntarily, and the man with the lantern disappeared. A dreary pause ensued, and the figure behind cried, in a hollow voice, " Won't you go on ?"

They proceeded, hardly knowing how, to the end of this passage, and then saw a door opening into a very large room, where, at the farther end of it, stood the old man, still holding in his hand the lantern, which made the darkness and desolation of the apartment appear visible. He waved his hand that they might approach. They slowly advanced towards him ; when they were quite close to him, he cried, in a sharp tone,

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“ It is five and thirty years since a woman has been within the walls of this house. I wish I may not now repent my foolish compassion. I can afford you nothing but leave to remain in this room. There has been a fire in it to-day. My own security obliges me to lock you in. Here is a piece of candle in the lantern. With the dawn of the morning you must depart.” He then crossed the room, seemed either to lock or unlock a door on one side of it, and stalked away through that at which they had entered, where the other dismal figure had stood sentinel during this short conference. Struck with the horrors of being thus left in a situation, which, except that they were less liable to be frozen to death, appeared to Eupheme worse than that they had escaped from, she threw herself into her mother’s arms, and burst into tears.

The necessity of exertion had hitherto kept up the strength of Mrs. Widdrington; but now she seemed to lose not only her courage, but her senses. The terror of her daughter redoubled, when she perceived that her mother did not answer her, but seemed insensible to her tears and caresses. It was now her turn to exert herself. She seized the lantern, in which the candle was expiring, and examined the room, in hopes of she knew not what, but from a confused idea of obtaining some assistance for her mother. A door on one side was not locked, though the old man had appeared to lock it. Eupheme opened it; a violent gust of wind rushed into the room, but all was darkness beyond: She ventured in, however, a step or two; and, by the dull and wavering light she held, thought she saw three or four tall figures, in black, stand against the opposite wall of the high and spacious chamber;

chamber; she even fancied they moved; and terrified, she retreated hastily, and shut the door, which she endeavoured in vain to lock. On approaching her mother, she saw her eyes turned with a melancholy look towards the immense chimney, and she understood, from the signs Mrs. Widdrington made, that she should endeavour to revive the few embers that might yet be alive, under the handful of ashes that remained in the chimney. This then she endeavoured to do, and fortunately found two small pieces of unburnt wood, with which, though green, she at length contrived to make a blaze. She then assisted her mother to approach close to it; rubbed her hands to restore their warmth, chafed her feet, and covered her with her cloak and apron over her own. In a few moments her recollection returned, and she spoke; but her eyes were glazed, and her vital powers seemed still in a great degree

degree suspended. Eupheme dreaded the extinction of their light, and the failure of their fire. She raised the candle as well as she could, and again traversed the room, though still looking fearful towards the unlocked door, expecting every moment one of the spectres would appear at it, which she fancied she had seen in the room beyond it.

Her search now was to find something to feed their fire, on which her mother's existence seemed to depend; and such was the dismantled state of the room, that this was not difficult. The boards of the window-seats were rotten, and in broken splinters; Eupheme, without scruple, took a piece of them, and reserved others to keep up their fire, which afforded them such a supply, that she saw the last sinking gleam of the candle with less dismay; and with great difficulty, dragging to the fire a long and broken sort of settee, she persuaded
her

her mother to lie down upon it, while she knelt before her, still chaffing her hands, and endeavouring to re-animate the spark of life which fear and extreme cold had so nearly extinguished.

Fatigue, aided by the torpor which is always felt on being long exposed to severe cold, now conquered both faintness from want of food, and apprehension either for her child or herself, and Mrs. Widdrington fell into a dozing kind of stupor, which Eupheme flattered herself was sleep.

Anxiety, however, and fear lest the fire should go out, together with the dread of the terrific shapes that she still thought were in the next room, deterred the trembling girl from attempting to take any repose. The wind howled round the desolate mansion, and every now and then the door, towards which her looks were so fearfully directed, scrooped on

its hinges, and she fancied she saw the lock turn.

So passed the apparently longest night that she had ever known. Day at length appeared, faintly glimmering through the crevices of the window-shutters; and with its first dawn Eupheme would gladly have left this inhospitable abode, but that her mother remained in a state that rendered it hopeless to propose it to her. She seemed wholly exhausted; hunger, fatigue, and cold had on her the effect of long illness, and she endeavoured in vain to move, when Eupheme made her recollect the necessity of their immediate departure.

Nothing was now to be done, on the part of Eupheme, but to endeavour to find some refreshment for her mother, which might give her strength to proceed. She proposed this, and receiving her assent, she ventured once more to enter the room where she had seen, the night

night before, shapes, which her terrified imagination had magnified into spectres, from whence she thought she might find a passage to the part of the house inhabited by the two old men, who, however, appeared to her to be wraiths and kelpies *, rather than living beings. On her opening the door, she now perceived that the objects of her affright were nothing more than large bundles of vegetables, tied up for the seed to dry, and some of them wrapped round with pieces of rug and mat: the whole room was covered with things of the same nature, and it seemed to have been many years since it had been inhabited by any other animals than the vermin which these things attracted. Eupheme found no door in this great room, but one which opened into a sort of garden or court, and which had once been

* Evil spirits so called in Scotland.

glazed, but was now composed of old boards nailed in place of sashes. She would have opened one of the windows, in hopes of being able to get out of it, but just as she was attempting to lift the sash, a young man appeared in boots, a thick great coat, and a flapped hat, who, with a dejected air, picked his way through the deep snow. The noise she made at the window startled him; he looked up, and had he seen all the *ghaists* which Eupheme had figured to herself the night before, he could not have testified more surprise. The sight of him was much less so to Eupheme, who, supposing he belonged to the house, renewed her efforts to open the window in order to speak to him. He saw her design, and stepping forward, forced up the old shattered sash, which seemed within-side to be confined by cobwebs and dirt.

Then,

Then, in a voice and manner expressive of the greatest surprise, he inquired, though very respectfully, by what strange accident he saw her there. Eupheme related briefly what had befallen them; and he, again expressing his wonder, and in still stronger terms his concern, told her very hastily that the old gentleman who, with one ancient domestic, inhabited the house, was a man of very large fortune, who, in consequence of some disappointment near forty years before, had taken a dislike to the world, and particularly to women, not one having ever been suffered to enter his house since; that he had fallen insensibly into the vice of old age, extreme avarice, and, though he was supposed to have very great sums of money concealed in the house, he denied himself the common necessities of life. The young man went on to say that he was the nephew of this singular person, the only son of his only sister, whom

whom he had but within the two or three last years consented to see; but that he never eat or drank in the house, and only made an occasional visit from a neighbouring town, where he lived with his mother, always expecting to find that his uncle was either murdered for the sums of money that were supposed to be hid in the house, or had perished through his extreme fear of being at the least expence; and that the unusual rigour of the preceding night had occasioned him to pay an early visit of inquiry, because he thought that the old man might very probably have suffered himself to die of cold rather than allow himself a fire.

Such an account gave but little hope to the unfortunate Eupheme, that she should be able to procure, for her mother, the refreshment that was become so requisite. She related, to the young man, the deplorable situation her parent

was

was in, and her own fears. He declared, with great appearance of confusion, his inability to help her so immediately as he wished ; but said, that to offer the old gentleman, whose name was Morsewall, to pay for any thing they might have, would be the only way to engage him to accommodate them ; that in the mean time he would hasten to see what could be done for them, without appearing, however, to know any thing of what had passed, for the least offence given to his uncle would, he said, not only prevent his being of the least use to them, but, perhaps, shut him out for ever.

My story would run into too great length, were I to relate the particulars of the following scenes. For three days, Mrs. Widdrington remained in a state which rendered her removal impossible ; but, contrary to all expectation, Mr. Morsewall suffered her to have a bed in his

his house, such as it was, and even a little fire. His nephew procured them by means of a labourer he employed, some wine and other necessaries, which the house did not afford: He got their chaise refitted; and as soon as the unhappy Mrs. Widdrington was able to move, saw her carefully conveyed to the town where his mother lived, and where, in some days more, she so far recovered by the kindness of these strangers, and the tender assiduity of her daughter, that she was enabled once more to renew her mournful journey.

I will not enter into a detail of the sufferings of the mother and daughter when they reached London, where neither of them had ever been before, and now came to visit, in prison, the husband and the father, who had so little merited this cruel destiny: Suffice it to tell you that, from the chicanery of those infamous men who thrive and fatten on the
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miseries of others, Mr. Widdrington would probably have died in confinement, if the nephew of old Morsewall had not suddenly appeared there. Introducing himself as the old acquaintance of Mrs. Widdrington, who warmly acknowledged the obligations she owed to him, he desired to speak with her husband in private, when he told him, that his uncle was lately dead, having literally starved himself to death; that he immediately came into the undisputed possession of wealth, much greater than his most sanguine ideas had taught him to suppose; and that the filial affection, beauty, and innocence of Miss Widdrington had made such an impression upon him, when she had been reduced to the necessity of taking a temporary asylum at Mr. Morsewall's, that he had no sooner paid the last duties to his uncle and secured the sums in specie, as well as the securities he had left him, than he hastened

tened to lay the whole at her feet ; and he trusted, not only that she would not reject him, but that she would suffer him to make the best use of his fortune, by releasing her father.

A very few days now served, with the assistance of a lawyer employed by Mr. Westcombe, (for so the young lover was called,) to settle all the affairs of Mr. Widdrington, in a much better way than he expected. The marriage-ceremony between Mr. Westcombe and Eupheme was no sooner over, than they set out for Scotland, where, in a few months afterwards, Charles Widdrington returned, cured of his ambition, and anxious only to make amends to his father for all he had suffered on his account, by assisting him in his farm, which soon flourished more than before his misfortunes. Mr. and Mrs. Westcombe fitted up an house in the pleasantest part of Yorkshire, to which he had succeeded, among many other

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other estates: and the night that threatened to be the last of hers and of her mother's life, is now thought of with gratitude to that Providence which thus brought good out of evil, and from apparent misfortune produced long and unusual felicity.

Remarks on this little narrative closed the evening.

THE END.

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